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AUTHOR Fernandez, Celestino; Marenco, Eduardo, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

The report interprets and explains the basis of Mexican American/Anglo disparity in the educational experience through the theoretical framework of "group conflict." Chapter One presents the group conflict model of society, outlining the manner in which groups form and compete for power, wealth, and prestige. Chapter Two focuses on the way in which education serves the interests of the dominant group, mirroring the stratified structure of the larger society, assuring the fulfillment of the dominant group's interest. Chapter Three examines the relative position of Mexican Americans and Anglos in the American social structure, exploring differences in income, occupation, and political representation. Chapter Four considers the research on achievement, dropout rates, higher education, and other areas for Mexican Americans and Anglos. Chapter Five discusses the process of social change as perceived within the conflict perspective, concluding that basically, change in the larger society precedes change in the educational system, and that the dominant group usually attempts to control the process of social change, reacting most forcefully where it perceives the greatest loss of power, wealth, and prestige. The conflict model provides a framework of techniques for placing political pressure on established institutions to better respond to the needs of Mexican Americans nationwide. (NEC)

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GROUP CONFLICT, EDUCATION, AND MEXICAN AMERICANS

A DISCUSSION PAPER

CELESTINO FERNÁNDEZ, PH.D.
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

EDUARDO MARENCO, JR., PH.D
NATIONAL DIRECTOR FOR
POLICY STUDIES AND RESEARCH
MALDEF

RC 012859

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND

GROUP CONFLICT, EDUCATION, AND MEXICAN AMERICANS

A Discussion Paper

Celestino Fernandez, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology
University of Arizona

Eduardo Marenco, Jr., Ph.D.
National Director for
Policy Studies and Research
MALDEF

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The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
28 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94108

The men of the higher circles are not representative men; their high position is not a result of moral virtue; their fabulous success is not firmly connected with meritorious ability. Those who sit in the seats of the high and the mighty are selected and formed by the means of power, the sources of wealth, the mechanics of celebrity, which prevail in their society.

C. Wright Mills

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Men may not get what they pay for but they must certainly pay for all they get.

Frederick Douglass

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Finally, the views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy, position, or endorsement of MALDEF, the National Institute of Education, or the outside reviewers.

Preface

This report endeavors to interpret and explain the basis of Mexican American/Anglo differences in the educational experience. The simple question, "Why is it that, on the average, Mexican Americans fare relatively poorly in the educational system?" requires a complex answer. What we offer as an explanation, in fact, is a theoretical framework, known in sociological literature as "group conflict." Through this model inequities in schooling and education between Mexican Americans and Anglos are understood as resulting from inequities found in the larger society.

To be sure, the group conflict approach (perspective, model, paradigm) presented herein may not display a degree of scientific formalization and rigidity that would warrant calling it a theory. Within the science of sociology, however, such a detailed set of premises, concepts, and empirical generalizations do reflect the notion of "theory." While not final, group conflict offers a broad perspective which can be applied to both large and small "problems." Specifically, this approach should be useful for policy analysts and policy makers concerned with the academic status of Mexican Americans and to other individuals working for social change.

In the data chapters we attempted to present the latest findings; in some cases, however, current data were not available.

"Older"data should not be dismissed lightly since data in other areas which cover two points in time show that little change has occured in the past decade. Although some change has taken place, the relative position of Mexican Americans vis-à-vis Anglos has remained essentially the same and the patterns of inequity have continued.

In Chapter One we present the group conflict model of society, outlining the way in which groups form and compete for power, wealth, and prestige. From this perspective, social order results from the dominant group's structuring of society. Once a group gains dominance, it attempts to perpetuate its power, wealth, and prestige through its control of the resources.

Chapter Two focuses on the way in which education serves the interest of the dominant group. Specifically, the educational system is controlled by the dominant community and mirrors the stratified structure of the larger society, assuring that the dominant group's interests are fulfilled.

In Chapter Three we look at the relative position of Mexican Americans and Anglos in the American social structure. Differences in income, occupation, and political representation are explored. These areas are important because of their central role in the attainment and maintenance of power, wealth, and prestige. Moreover, they are representative of a persistent pattern of the relatively low status of Mexican Americans in our society.

Formal education also plays a central role in the acquisition and perpetuation of power, wealth, and prestige. In Chapter Four we examine the research on achievement, dropout rates, higher education,as well as other areas for Mexican Americans and Anglos. Mexican Americans, as predicted by the conflict model, tend to fare poorly in relation to Anglos.

In the last chapter we discuss the process of social change as perceived within the conflict perspective. Basically, change in the larger society precedes change in the educational system. Furthermore, the dominant group usually attempts to control the process of social change, reacting most forcefully where it perceives the greatest loss of power, wealth, and prestige.

Finally, this report focuses on Mexican Americans (individuals of Mexican origin or ancestry who reside in the United States),thus we use the term "Mexican Americans" throughout. We avoided using other terms such as Chicanos, Latinos, Raza, etc.,for the sake of clarity. In a few instances, however, we were forced to use the terms "Hispanics" and "Spanish-surnamed." These terms were employed only when discussing outside data, reflecting the usage of such categories.

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C H A P T E R O N E

Explication of the Model

A sociological analysis of the institutions of modern society,and in particular of the educational system, must begin with a critical analysis and discussion of the larger society, for institutions and organizations operate within, and often mirror,the structure of the larger society. That is, reflection on the sociopolitical organizational structure of the greater system provides the social setting and other clues necessary for understanding and explaining structural features of the educational system, particularly as they influence the educational experience of any given group of Mexican-American students.

This chapter presents a working theoretical framework for viewing,understanding, and explaining the structure of society as it changes to adjust to racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Specifically, we ask, What are the power relationships that govern society and, in turn, the educational system?

Conflict theory as an explanatory paradigm or working theory of the structure of society has been part of a tradition running from Machiavelli and Hobbes, to Marx and Weber, to Dahrendorf and Mills, to its modern explicator--Collins. The model in its rudimentary form explains individual and group behavior in terms of "self-interests in a material world," where "social order is seen as being founded on organized coercion" and conflict exists as parties struggle for power and domination (Collins,1975:57). "For conflict theory, the basic insight is that human beings are sociable but conflict-prone animals" (Collins, 1975:59).

The General Model

Competing Interest Groups

Group conflict theory of sociopolitical stratification is based on two basic propositions. The first can be termed the "group" aspect and the second, the "conflict" dimension. The underlying assumption is that society is composed of numerous interest groups (subcultures, associations, status groups, communities, ethnic groups, etc.) which are competing for the scarce resources of power, wealth, and prestige found in society (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Collins, 1975; Dahrendorf, 1959; Mills, 1956). In this competition lies the conflict.

The assumption regarding the group structure of society can be stated as follows: society is composed of numerous associational groups sharing common cultures (or subcultures). The number of status groups varies from society to society and there is no need to determine a priori the exact number of groups in a particular society. These are matters of empirical variation, not of definition, and are therefore interesting but not crucial to the proposition. What is important is that groups are central to the structure of society; society is composed of groups. Although the core of these status groups consists of families, they extend to larger communities, such as religious, ethnic, racial, cultural, or socioeconomic classes. In general, status groups

> ...comprise all persons who share a sense of status equality based on participation in a common culture: styles of language, tastes in clothing and decor, manners and other ritual observances, conversational topics and styles, opinions and values, and preferences in sports, arts, and media (Collins, 1971:1009).

Status groups may evolve from a number of sources. These groups may form on the basis of social class, ethnicity, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, religion, language, or any other shared interest or vested status. Weber (1968) outlines three common sources of group formation:

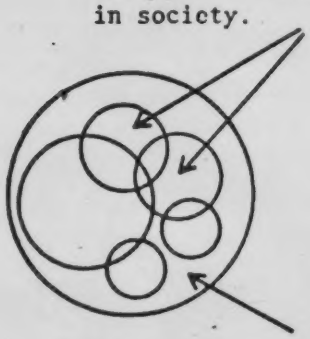
1. differences in life style based on economic situation (e.g., the rich participate in exclusive plush country clubs and attend club-type sporting events like golf and tennis vs. poor people watching "professional" wrestling matches on television);
2. differences in life style based on power position (e.g., two-hour martini "business" luncheons vs. half-hour lunch breaks where one has to clock in and out); and
3. differences in life style deriving from cultural or institutional differences (e.g., the small nuclear family structure common in Anglo culture vs. the extended family structure found in the Mexican-American community).

Persons can be members of more than one status group, but as is commonly the case, the groups to which one person belongs are seldom in direct conflict with each other. Empirically, for example, one may be both a Democrat and a Catholic simultaneously but it would be unlikely that individuals would find themselves members both of the Catholic Church and of the Church of Scientology. We recognize, however, that any given person can experience conflict when he or she finds himself or herself a member of two groups that have a difference of opinion on a given issue, e.g., birth control, ERA, etc.

Figure 1 illustrates the associational status structure of the group conflict model of society. The larger circle represents the total society and the smaller circles within it represent the diverse status groups competing for dominance. In our present discussion the circles may be interpreted as representing the various racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in the United States. The differences in size correspond to the empirical numerical variations found in our society. That is, the Native-American group is smaller than Black, Asian, or Hispanic groups, and the largest and most powerful group is composed of middle-class whites (Anglos).[1] Theoretically or empirically the largest group does not necessarily have to be the most powerful or dominant group. In South Africa, for example, there is no direct correlation between the size and power of groups. That is, while Blacks form the largest group they are not the most powerful. In the United States, on the other hand, size and power reside in the same group; the largest group is also the most powerful. Also, while Hispanics form the fastest growing minority group in the nation, their political power does not appear to be increasing proportionally.

Figure 1

Schematic representation of the basic assumption of conflict theory: interest groups competing for the scarce resources in society.



This illustration exemplifies the fluid and overlapping nature of associational groups and their cultural status in the larger society. Thus, groups vary in size, overlap in interests, and have fluid rather than rigid boundaries. In the United States we find numerous empirical examples illustrating these properties: 1) most racial, ethnic, and cultural groups share the same political and economic interests (overlap of interests); 2) not all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups are equal in numbers (vary in size); and 3) fine distinctions between religious sects are often unclear (fluid boundaries).

Conflict Dimension

Just as the numerous racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have different interests based on some common characteristic, they have different levels of available resources based on their relative standing in the power structure. Consequently, some groups are in a better position than others to pursue their interests actively.

This differential distribution of resources implies the second proposition of our model, the notion of "conflict": there is continual struggle among the status groups in society for various resources--power, wealth, and prestige (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Collins, 1975; Dahrendorf, 1959; Mills, 1956). Mills (1956:19) discussed the interrelationship between power, wealth, and prestige.

> Like wealth and power, prestige tends to be cumulative: the more of it you have, the more you can get. These values also tend to be translatable into one another: the wealthy find it easier than the poor to gain power; those with status find it easier than those without it to control opportunities for wealth.

The conflict proposition may also be stated as follows: structurally generated interest groups engage in conflicts (antagonisms and manifest clashes between forces) over existing arrangements of social structure. But why is there conflict?

> Above all else, there is conflict because violent coercion is always a potential resource, and it is a zero-sum sort. This does not imply anything about the inherence of drives to dominate; what we do know firmly is that being coerced is an intrinsically unpleasant experience, and hence that any use of coercion, even by a small minority, calls forth conflict in the form of antagonism to being dominated. Add to this the fact that coercive power, especially as represented in the state, can be used to bring one economic goods and emotional gratification--and to deny them to others--and we can see that the availability of coercion as a resource ramifies conflicts throughout the entire society (Collins, 1975:59).

Dominance and Social Structure

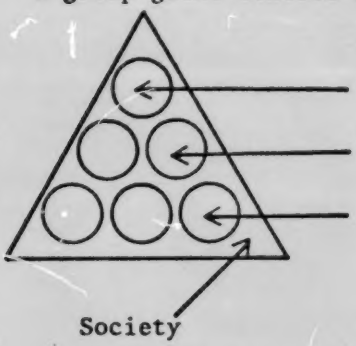
Given the unequal and competitive nature of this model of society, the implication is that one group emerges as dominant and takes over control of the societal system. By dominant we mean that a group possesses the power to issue authoritative commands to be followed by a given group of persons (subordinate groups). By power we mean that ability to perpetuate the will of one's group even when other groups disagree. Power and authority are seen as instrumental values; the possession of power and authority does not figure as a value sought for its own sake, but rather as opportunities to realize specific group interests.

Once a group is dominant, it restructures society through its control of resources, so as to maintain its power and dominant status. As Dahrendorf (1959:157) noted, "coherence and order in society are founded on force and constraint, on the domination of some and the subjugation of others." The restructuring and

ordering of society are most easily represented as a system of hierarchical stratification, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Schematic representation of the restructuring of society when a group gains control in and of the system (the United States)



Dominant group -- Anglo elites

Subdominant groups -- Anglo middle classes

Dominated groups -- racial, ethnic, and cultural minority groups (e.g., Blacks. Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, etc.) as well as poor whites

The dominant group does not rule by itself, but rather through a system of differential distribution of power and authority. Attached to it are several subdominant groups which, while not exercising complete control over their lives, do enjoy the benefits of society by agreeing to the dominant status of the ruling cultural group and acting in partnership with the dominant group to bring about control of the balance of the societal system (Fernández and Llanes, 1977).

> The power elite are not solitary rulers. Advisers and consultants, spokesmen and opinion-makers are often the captains of their higher thought and decisions. Immediately below the elite are the professional politicians of the middle levels of power (Mills, 1956:4).

American Social Structure

In the United States the various stratifications levels represent racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. At the top we

find Anglo elites who are in the highest position of power and control and who make decisions that effect the whole society. Located in the subdominant level are the Anglo middle classes which share in the benefits of society but not to the same extent as the highest sector. At the bottom of the stratified system we find racial, ethnic, and cultural groups like Blacks, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, as well as poor whites. These groups have less access to the power structure and to other resources (e.g., education, employment, housing, health services, etc.); they are excluded from authority. Empirically, of course, an intersection exists between ethnicity and social class; some whites are located at the bottom of the structure and a few minorities are found at the middle and upper levels. We have chosen not to isolate social class as a separate independent explanatory variable in the present treatise in order to simplify the analysis and discussion. To be sure, our examination of the structural relationship between Anglos and Mexican Americans implies that stratification, social class, and status are central to the analysis. We do not mean to imply, by any means, that all Anglos are making it; poor whites are clearly not in positions of power, wealth, or prestige. We are also not implying that all Mexican Americans are located at the bottom of the socioeconomic and power structure. We are working with the fact that a disproportionate number of Anglos are located at the top and a disproportionate number of Mexican Americans are found at the bottom.

When applied to ethnicity, the group conflict model does not preclude socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status continues

to be the major predictive variable; however, we argue that in terms of Anglo/Mexican American relations, ethnicity is still an important explanatory variable.[2] In other words, holding socioeconomic status constant does not wash away Anglo/Mexican American differences in the life experience. Thus, in this report we focus on the impact of ethnicity.

Institutions as Resources

In modern societies like the United States institutions and organizations become part of the resources controlled by the dominant group. The ruling group uses them to protect and perpetuate its dominant status (Collins, 1975; Dahrendorf, 1959; Mills, 1956). Mills (1956:9-11) discussed the ways in which power, wealth, and prestige are acquired, maintained, and perpetuated through institutions in modern America. We quote here at length from his discussion.

> The higher circles in and around these command posts are often thought of in terms of what their members possess: they have a greater share than other people of the things and experiences that are most highly valued. From this point of view, the elite are simply those who have the most of what there is to have, which is generally held to include money, power, and prestige--as well as all the ways of life to which these lead. But the elite are not simply those who have the most, for they could not "have the most" were it not for their positions in the great institutions. For such institutions are the necessary bases of power, of wealth, and of prestige, and at the same time, the chief means of exercising power, of acquiring and retaining wealth, and of cashing in the higher claims for prestige.
>
> By the powerful we mean, of course, those who are able to realize their will, even if others resist it. No one, accordingly, can be truly powerful unless he has access to the command of major institutions, for it is over these institutional means of power that the truly powerful are, in the first instance, powerful. Higher politicians and key officials of government command such institutional power;

so do admirals and generals, and so do the major owners and executives of the larger corporations. Not all power, it is true, is anchored in and exercised by means of such institutions, but only within and through them can power be more or less continuous and important.

Wealth also is acquired and held in and through institutions. The pyramid of wealth cannot be understood merely in terms of the very rich; for the great inheriting families ...are now supplemented by the corporate institutions of modern society: every one of the very rich families has been and is closely connected--always legally and frequently managerially as well--with one of the multi-million dollar corporations.

The modern corporation is the prime source of wealth, but, in latter-day capitalism, the political apparatus also opens and closes many avenues to wealth. The amount as well as the source of income, the power over consumer's goods as well as over productive capital, are determined by positions within the political economy....

Great prestige increasingly follows the major institutional units of the social structure. It is obvious that prestige depends, often quite decisively, upon access to the publicity machines that are now a central and normal feature of all the big institutions of modern America. Moreover, one feature of these hierarchies of corporation, state, and military establishment is that their top positions are increasingly interchangeable. One result of this is the accumulative nature of prestige. Claims for prestige, for example, may be initially based on military roles, then expressed in and augumented by an educational institution run by corporate executives, and cashed in, finally, in the political order....

If we took the one hundred most powerful men in America, the one hundred wealthiest, and the one hundred most celebrated away from the institutional postions they now occupy, away from their resources of men and women and money, away from the media of mass communication that are now focused upon them--then they would be powerless and poor and uncelebrated. For power is not of a man. Wealth does not center in the person of the wealthy. Celebrity is not inherent in any personality. To be celebrated, to be wealthy, to have power requires access to major institutions, for the institutional positions men occupy determine in large part their chances to have and to hold these valued experiences. (emphasis added)

Collins (1971:1009-1010) summarizes the central role played by institutions and organizations in complex societies as individuals and groups struggle for socially desired resources.

> The struggle for wealth, power and prestige is carried out primarily through organizations. There have been struggles throughout history among organizations controlled by different status groups, for military conquest, business advantage, or cultural hegemony.... In the more complex societies, struggle between status groups is carried out in large part within organizations, as the status groups controlling an organization coerce, hire, or culturally manipulate others to carry out their wishes.

The elaborate legislative and judicial systems in the United States serve as excellent examples of the role institutions play in power struggles among groups. Legislative halls and courtrooms have replaced battlefields and streets as the central arenas where group (as well as individual) conflicts are resolved. Court cases and federal legislation dealing with group rights are among those with the most popular appeal--such legislation and cases receive extended national attention and have aroused emotional debates at the local, state, and national levels. The following lists, while by no means exhaustive, provides specific examples:

1. Thirteenth Amendment: freeing Blacks from enslavement;
2. Fifteenth Amendment: giving Blacks the right to vote;
3. Nineteenth Amendment: giving women the right to vote;
4. 1954 U.S. Supreme Court Decision - Brown v. Board of Education;
5. 1974 U.S. Supreme Court Decision - Lau v. Nichols;
6. 1978 U.S. Supreme Court Decision - Bakke v. Regents of the University of California;

7. 1979 U.S. Supreme Court Decision - Weber v. Kaiser;
8. 1964 Civil Rights Act;
9. Education Amendments - Title VII;
10. Education Amendments - Title IX;
11. Language Minority Amendments to the Voting Rights Act [42 U.S.C. 1971 et seq.];
12. Proposed Equal Rights Amendment.

Recruitment of New Members and Assistants

While institutions are resources in their own right, the dominant group's control of them is based on its ability to recruit and place individuals in key positions of power throughout the various institutions and organizations.

"The establishment" selects new members and key assistants to high status organizational positions from its own group, or from those who aspire to be in the "club," especially to those positions where major policy decisions are made. An effort is also made to recruit persons for lower-level positions who have been educated to respect and support the "superiority" of the dominant group. These lower-level recruits become "the administrators of the establishment." This practice assures the ruling group its dominant position, as well as a smooth transition of power from generation to generation.

> Yet, in so far as the elite flourishes as a social class or as a set of men at command posts, it will select and form certain types of personality, and reject others. The kind of moral and psychological beings men become is in large part determined by the values they experience and the institutional roles they are allowed and expected to play.... So conceived, the elite is a set of higher circles whose members are selected, trained and certified and permitted intimate access to those who command the impersonal institutional hierarchies of modern society (Mills, 1956:15).

Summary

Group conflict appears to be a well-grounded approach to the study of social order in which society is viewed as a conglomerate of interest groups competing for dominance in and of society, and where one group evolves as dominant. Moreover, once a group gains control, the ordering of society corresponds to their dominance and others' subordination. The social order, therefore, does not naturally evolve because one group is better fitted to rule and other groups are better fitted to be ruled; rather, it is brought about by the dominant group in specific ways. It is based on the differential distribution of power and authority. In short, social order is based on organized coercion, where the dominant group controls the major organizations, institutions, and other resources and constantly attempts to maintain this control.

> The power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. Whether they do or do not make such decisions is less important than the fact that they do occupy such pivotal positions: their failure to act, their failure to make decisions, is itself an act that is often of greater consequence than the decisions they do make. For they are in command of the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society. They rule the big corporations. They run the machinery of the state and claim its perogatives. They direct the military establishment. They occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which are now centered the effective means of the power and the wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy (Mills, 1956:3-4).

In other words:

> The elite (ruling group) cannot be truly thought of as men who are merely doing their duty. They are the ones who determine their duty, as well as the duties of those beneath them. They are not merely following orders: they give the orders. They are not merely "bureaucrats": they command bureaucracies (Mills, 1956:286).

The dominant cultural community (Anglos in the United States as evidenced by their position in the economic, political, and cultural structure as well as by their control of the major social institutions and organizations) attempts to monopolize desirable organizational positions and other resources in an effort to perpetuate itself and its ruling status. The major institutions of society become part of the resources controlled by the dominant group. In modern corporate societies, and in the United Staes in particular, the educational system serves as a key institution and resource for the dominant cultural group. In the following chapter we elaborate on the role of education in the process of social order.

Cautionary Note

Although Weber, Dahrendorf, Mills, and Collins have been well received in sociology, conflict theory as a minority paradigm will meet with resistence from the dominant community. This is expected and such resistance testifies to the theory's predictive power. However, in order to minimize criticism of the model based on emotional, superficial, and casual interpretations or misconceptions about the authors' intent, note that for us the conflict perspective does not explicitly or implicitly represent or imply a conspiracy theory. That is, we do not state that the dominant group plots and conspires against subordinate groups. The issue of conscious or unconscious plotting by the dominant

group is resolved by the following assumption:

> ...inequalities in resources result in efforts by the dominant party to take advantage of the situation; this need not involve conscious calculation but a basic propensity of feeling one's way toward the areas of the greatest immediate reward, like flowers turning to the light. Social structures are to be explained in terms of the behavior following from various lineups of resources (Collins, 1975:60-61).

Although group narcissism and ethnocentrism are more common than group altruism, we concur with Mack and Snyder (1957:217) who note that

> competition involves striving for scarce objects... according to established rules which strictly limit what the competitors can do to each other in the course of striving; the chief objective is the scarce object, not the inquiry or destruction of an opponent per se. (emphasis added)

If there is any plotting or conspiracy by the dominant group (and we are not suggesting such a conscious process), it is more for itself than against other groups.[3] The emphasis is on self-preservation or maximizing their life chances. More importantly, we see that conflict theory shifts the central issues from form and means to goals and outcomes.

What is proposed herein is an objective explanatory model which takes into account group differences in economic and political power within the graded structure of society. In addition, the model offers a macrosociological explanation, an explanatory picture of the whole.[4]

Notes

1. The term "Anglo," although technically inaccurate, is widely accepted and used to denote the "white" group, those who are not Hispanics, Black, or members of other ethnic minority groups. Apparently, the term "Anglo" has its origins in the Spanish Anglosajón (Anglo-Saxon). Our use of the term simply refers to the dominant social element.

2. We are cognizant of Wilson's (1978) important study on the declining significance of race as it applies to black-white relations. Wilson convincingly argues that for black-white relations "the immediate source of the tension has more to do with racial competition for public schools, municipal political systems, and residential areas than with the competition for jobs" (p. 152). He finds that social class has taken a prominent role in "determining black access to privilege and power" (p. 2). Although we do not disagree with his basic argument--that black-white relations have undergone fundamental changes in the economic sphere resulting in the salience of social class as an explanatory variable of the Black experience--we do not believe that the same model applies equally to Anglo/Mexican American relations. First, the socio-historical Anglo/Mexican American experience cannot be equated to that of the black-white experience. Second, changes in the economic realm have not resulted in representation for Mexican Americans to the same degree as for Blacks. In short, therefore, Anglo/Mexican American relations in most spheres (including the economic sphere) can still be viewed in terms of the ethnic-cultural dimension (and to a lesser degree, in terms of social class).

This is not to imply that Wilson's model will never apply to Anglo/Mexican American relations, for we do note that the ethnic-cultural dimension should still be retained as an important explanatory variable in Anglo/Mexican American relations.

3. Empirically it is sometimes the case that the destruction of one group (through using gas chambers in Germany, dropping atomic bombs on Japan, enslaving Black people, or excluding groups from opportunity for education, employment, housing, health services, etc.) results from another party's attempt to maintain and perpetuate its dominant status, but this kind of destruction is usually not a goal in itself. A group, however, may intentionally control another's opportunity if it believes that this will better its situation.

4. Group conflict theory is also applicable at the microsociological level. Social reality is the product of interaction and negotiation. Thus conceived, it hardly matters at which level the interaction takes place. Social reality can be negotiated by the individual as he or she "talks" to himself or herself or by nations as they debate over the price of oil. The principles which assist in the explanation at the macrosociological level are also applicable to the microsociological level since the social process is fundamentally the same.

C H A P T E R T W O

Education as an Instituion and Resource

In developed nations, to control the major organizations and institutions is to control society. Although power, wealth, and prestige are the end resources for which groups vie, control of organizations and institutions is a necessary means to these goods. The institutions of a society, therefore, become resources for the dominant group; it uses them to protect and perpetuate itself and to control subordinate groups. The military, courts, and police have often been used by the dominant group to protect its status.

This kind of ruthless self-perpetuation frequently occurs in less developed countries as the small and powerful elite attempt to control the masses. The occurrence of this phenomenon is by no means restricted to less developed countries or to countries ruled by dictatorships. In the United States, for example, we experienced in the late sixties and early seventies the use of the military and police as methods of control for the dominant party ideology. Marches and demonstrations were controlled in this way and quickly turned into riots.

Equally important are the ways in which institutions and organizations, clearly resources for any group, are used to control intellectual ideologies through the control of access and placement within the social structure. In this chapter we apply the group conflict model to the institution of education and outline the ways in which this institution is used by the dominant community to its benefit and to the detriment of the nondominant community.

The Model Applied to Education

Viewed as a resource institution of the dominant group, the primary social function of the educational system is to serve the needs of that group. In modern America schools perform this function in two important ways. One, as a social process schools teach (transmit) a certain culture, and two, as a social institution they serve as credentialing and licensing institutions for allocation into the occupational structure.

In further explanation of these two points:

1. School as a Socialization Process

   Schools are created to transmit particular cultures. Within all societies education serves as a vehicle for the enculturation of the young. The cultural perceptions individuals hold are in large part the result of their schooling. The main activity of schools is the teaching of the dominant group's culture, as an item in the curriculum as well as a process of socialization. The values, attitudes, and beliefs of the dominant ethnic community rule the educational system, a system of values and preferences, therefore, that is implanted into more or less receptive clients. Schools teach a particular language, styles of dress, values, social attitudes, polite manners, aesthetic tastes, modes of interaction, in short, a particular sociocultural style. The total educational environment is geared to this end.

"Education socializes people into a particular kind of culture, working best on those who already have acquired the general orientation in their families" (Collins, 1975:86-87). In the United States the content of public school education has been dominated by white (Anglo-Saxon) culture (Becker, 1961; Dreeben, 1968; Fernández and Llanes, 1977; Fishman, 1961; Gordon, 1964, 1978; Hess and Torney, 1967; Ramírez and Castañeda, 1974). Its processes have been dominated by white middle-class perceptions both of itself and of minority groups, thereby pinpointing the place of the minority group person in society, even in his or her own eyes. The competitive nature of schools, the selective presentation of history, the training of doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, all reflect the cultural biases of this group. Furthermore, the non-English speaker has encountered English-only instruction while instruction in his or her native language has been continually sanctioned (Gordon, 1964, 1978; Ramírez and Castañeda, 1974; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972a).

2. School as a Social Institution

A major purpose of the educational system in modern corporate society is to transmit and assign social status (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963). This is most commonly accomplished through higher education by means of certification and formal licensing. Education has come to be the yardstick by which every individual's

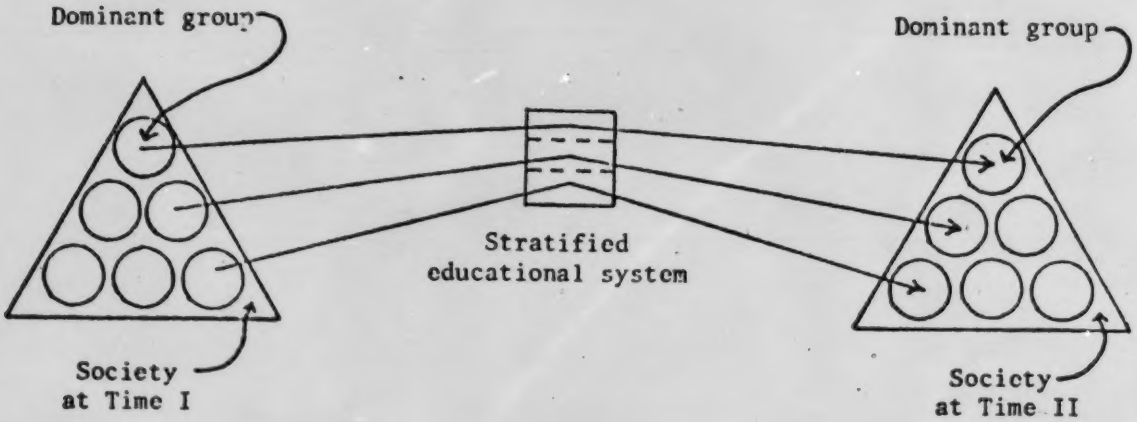
"productive capabilities" are judged. No other legitimate avenues exist to adulthood. Societal roles and positions are assigned based on the level (and to a lesser extent the quality) of formal education received.[5] In this way, even persons who do not go through the formal educational system are affected by it (Illich, 1970; Meyer, 1970).[6] Educational requirements for participation in the larger society help serve to select members of the dominant culture to top-level positions, as well as to recruit individuals to middle-level positions who have acquired a general respect and reverence for the culture of the dominant group. Hence, this kind of educational system can be viewed as serving as a legitimating process for inequalities in the larger society. Numerous sources based on empirical evidence testify that education has been used as a means of cultural selection (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bowles, 1977; Collins, 1971; Hollingshead, 1949). Based on his review of the literature in this area, Collins (1975:454) concluded that "education is important, not for providing technical skill but for membership in a cultural group which controls access to particular jobs." In short, educational requirements for "productive participation" in society have become the primary means of racial, ethnic, and cultural control.

The Social Structure of Education

The educational system seems to be the best example of the ways in which the ruling group uses institutions to maintain and perpetuate its dominant status. The conflict model of analysis when applied to education predicts that the stratified structure of society will be equally stratified within the educational system. Stratification in schooling is evidenced through tracking in all levels of education; for example, in higher education we find two-year colleges, four-year colleges, state universities, and private universities with unequal resource allocation based on financial systems with various combinations of private and public funds. Figure 3 illustrates how the structure of the larger society may be preserved and transmitted through the stratified educational system.

Figure 3

Schematic representation of the utility of the educational system for the maintenance and perpetuation of the dominant group



The figure implies that there will be a general tendency for children of parents of the dominant group to do well in school and children of parents from those groups with the least power to do less well. Indeed, this is what is found in the United States; majority children consistently do better in school and college than minority children. A massive amount of statistical data exists verifying this proposition. For example, we know specifically that children of the dominant group (Anglos):

1. begin with advantages over nondominant groups on entering school (Coleman, et al., 1966; Espinosa, Fernández, and Dornbusch, 1979)--this disparity, in fact, becomes larger with advancing grade levels;
2. attend higher status schools (schools with more and higher quality resources, i.e., better educated teachers, college preparatory curricula, etc.) (Guthrie, et al., 1971);
3. achieve at higher rates than subordinate groups, specifically, their scores on achievement tests are significantly higher (Espinosa, Fernández, and Dornbusch, 1979; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b);
4. drop out of school and college at much lower rates (Eckland and Wisenbaker, 1978; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b);
5. graduate from high school, college, and graduate and

professional schools at higher rates than minority students (Dearman and Plisko, 1979);

6. consequently move into the more powerful, prestigious, and highest paying positions in the larger society (Blau and Duncan, 1967).

The above list should be interpreted as illustrative and not exhaustive. A wealth of statistical data exist on majority-minority differences in all aspects of the educational process. In addition, proportionally few Mexican Americans, for example, participate in extracurricular activities (sports, school clubs, band, etc.) compared to Anglos (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b). The Commission found this to be the case even in schools where Mexican Americans constituted a numerical majority of the student body.

In fact, the dominant group's struggle to retain advantage in the schools extends even to nonacademic activities. Miller and Preston (1973), for example, found that as late as 1969 Mexican American access to participation as cheerleaders was controlled in the Crystal City, Texas high school. Although 86 percent of the student body was Mexican American, cheerleaders were selected (by a panel of faculty judges) according to a quota of three Anglos and one Mexican American. This is as clearly an example of dominance and subordination as one can find in the educational system, but there are more subtle and less visible ways of controlling access and advancement through the educational system. For a more detailed account of the Crystal City experience, see Chapter Five.

Effects of Credentialing and Certification

The credentialing and certification function of education serves to restrict lower-income and minority persons from the powerful and prestigious positions in society. Collins (1975), among others, also views certification as directly linked to power. "The greater the political influence over the state held by a cultural community, the more likely it is to monopolize desirable organizational positions by means of licensing or other credential systems" (Collins, 1975:459). This is further exemplified by the fact that educational requirements continue to be raised (particularly as evidenced by rising scores on aptitude tests) in spite of research which consistently shows that education is, at best, a poor predictor of occupational performance (Berg, 1971; Blair, 1972; Goodman, 1962; Guthrie et al., 1971; Jencks, 1972; Michelson, 1972). Furthermore, the certification and credentialing functions of education have their most damaging effect on groups with the least resources, i.e., Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans.

Certification and credentialing becomes most important in modern nations, such as the United States, where the occupational realm (and particularly higher paying and more prestigious work) is open only to persons who complete the required level of education (Arrow, 1974; Berg, 1971; Stiglitz, 1975; Taubman and Wales, 1973, 1974). The credentialist model of education proposes that the completion of the major levels of schooling (i.e., elementary

school, high school, college, and graduate or professional school) is an important determinant (and thus predictor) of earnings. Goodman (1979:270) summarizes this perspective:

> Schooling by this argument is a screening device which certifies that those who have successfully completed a given level possess certain qualities (skills, ability or family background) that should be rewarded; those without the necessary credentials are deemed not to possess the qualities that would entitle them to the greater earnings afforded those with the necessary credentials.

The idea of school as a screening device, however, is not without criticism (Chiswick, 1973; Layard and Psacharopoulos, 1974). Nevertheless, recent research supports this approach. Goodman (1979) compared five models dealing with the economic returns to education. He found that a slightly modified credentialist model best fit the data (i.e., explained the most variance). In other words, sizable increments in earnings were associated with the attainment of the high school diploma and the college credential (bachelor's degree).

Regardless of the theoretical model employed, however, education has been found to be a powerful predictor of economic and social status (Levin et al., 1971). That is, education has been identified as a major key to economic well-being in modern societies and particularly in the United States. Specifically, higher annual incomes and lifetime earnings are associated with advanced educational attainment.

Collins (1975:459), among others, views certification as directly linked to power.

> The greater the political influence over the state held by a cultural community, the more likely it is to monopolize desirable organizational positions by means of licensing or other credential systems.

Controlled Opportunity Systems for Mobility

Thus conceived, the educational system serves as the "gatekeeper" for the dominant cultural group by screening, selecting, and allocating individuals to their social roles and occupational positions (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963). Formal education, and particularly the structure of higher education, systematically reproduces the racial, ethnic, and culturally stratified division of labor found in the larger society.

It should be noted that empirically the system is not absolutely rigid; there is some mobility. Minorities and individuals from the lower social classes do get good grades and move up and some persons from the upper classes do get "ungentlemanly" D's, but in general the groups remain in the same positions. It may even be that in certain societies which attempt to perpetuate the myth of egalitarianism and collectivism it is to the advantage of the dominant party to create and perpetuate a degree of upward mobility, creating the illusion that the system is not biased. The predictive question for the dominant group then becomes: How many individuals from the subordinate groups can be allowed upward mobility into the highest rank without posing a real threat to the dominant group?

An analogy may be drawn between outcomes in gambling casinos and outcomes in the educational system. Common knowledge tells us that the odds are overwhelmingly in the casinos' favor. The owners know and understand this; that is why they are in the business. Casinos basically control the games, assuring that the outcomes are in their favor.

The dominant cultural community controls the educational system in much the same way. Of course, the control is more subtle and less direct. Yet, outcomes are systematic; children of the dominant group, on the average, succeed in the system while the others do not succeed as well.

White (1978) discusses how the use of the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) for selection of students favors the dominant group. He shows that as the minority demand for legal education increased during the 1960s, the importance of high LSAT scores also increased. Furthermore, the LSAT has been culturally biased in favor of the white community.

> It is these tests which regulate entrance to the profession. It is these tests which preserve the traditional legal profession dominated by wealthy, white males (White, 1978:663).

And although the number of lawyers has grown substantially during the past twenty years, relatively few minorities are found in the profession. White (1978:642-643) notes that

> This growing circle of attorneys remains largely white and male--a group who would seem to have an obvious interest in protecting the prestige and income of lawyers.

Meritocracy in Education

Although the American educational system operates under the label of meritocratic advancement (individual advancement through merit), racial, ethnic, and cultural variables play an important role in the daily workings of the meritorious variables. Racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities have been systematically denied access to schools and especially to institutions of higher education (Weinberg, 1977). Individuals involved in decision making in any aspect of education (from elementary school teachers to presidents of major universities) will readily admit (in private, of course) that race, ethnicity, cultural background, and social class as well as a host of other nonacademic (noncognitive) factors play a role (sometimes major, sometimes minor, but always present) in influencing decisions.

Individuals involved in the decision-making process in higher education (particularly decisions regarding admission or retention of a student or promotion of a faculty member) understand that in some decisions value judgments are at least as important as the dictates of standards; in these cases meritocracy plays a secondary role in the decision. To be sure, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) might say, there is a great deal of subjectivity in the production of social objectivity.

University decisions, whether for admitting students, hiring faculty and administrators, or promoting and retaining faculty are often based on less than objective factors (e.g., does the applicant have the "right" background characteristics such as sex, age, or ethnicity or has the faculty member published in the

"right" journals or coauthored an article with a well-known senior individual in the field). Such criteria are defined as confidential and consequently are not made available to the public, giving the impression that these types of decisions are based purely on merit and academic achievement. As Manning (1978:14) has noted

> It is often the "soft data" whose use is hidden from public view; thus secrecy serves to cloak unreliable--even arbitrary--actions.

Clearly, there is no single unique order of preference among candidates, but many different ones. A particular ordering and decision depends heavily on the weight attached to the various criteria. The public is led to believe that academic decisions are dependent on a narrowly based concept of merit; quite often, of course, such decisions are based primarily on subjective evaluations of nonacademic factors.

An example of types of noncognitive judgment which enters into academic decision making is contained in Brown and Marenco (1979). They found that some law schools in California, including some public institutions, when screening student applicants take into account such irrelevant characteristics as: 1) whether the applicant's parents or relatives are alumni of the institution; and 2) whether the applicant's parents or relatives are donors to the institution. The brochure used in recruitment in one of the private colleges reads as follows:

On occasion, <u>special consideration will be given to</u>

> graduates of (name of University) and to children of alumni who appear to be qualified to do acceptable work in the School of Law. In addition, the University reserves the right to make several special appointments to the entering class each year from among applicants who may not meet the objective qualifications for admission but whose background, subjective qualifications, special interests and relationship to the University make them deserving of an opportunity to study law. (emphasis added)

In this extreme example we can see how schools fail as meritocratic institutions. They systematically operate in ways consistent with the maintenance of the existing social order.

Summary

The dominance theory as applied to education may be summarized in hypotheses as follows:

1. Since education is one of the institutions used by the dominant social group to maintain and perpetuate itself and its leadership role,
   a. the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people who belong to the dominant group will rule the educational system;
   b. sociocultural peers of the parents who belong to the dominant group will be the teachers and administrators of the school system;
   c. resources and individuals will be allocated unequally among the schools; and
   d. children of parents who belong to the dominant group will do better in school than children of the subordinate group.

Theoretical bases for the above hypotheses can be extracted as follows:

1. It can be argued that education is used by the dominant social group in diverse societies to maintain and perpetuate itself. Noting the two extremes of the educational spectrum will suffice. At one end of the spectrum we find societies in which the dominant group reserves education for a select group, admitting only members of this elite group to the educational system (e.g., England, and most Latin American countries). At the other end we find societies in which education is compulsory and thereby intended for all groups (e.g., the United States). On the surface the latter practice appears to circumvent the interest of the dominant group, but further examination shows otherwise. We find that compulsory schooling produces highly predictable group outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966); grants unequal resources (Dominguez and Fernández, 1978); reserves certain schools for members of the dominant group (Clark, 1960); and teaches the ideologies of the dominant group (Dreeben, 1968). Certainly the form in which dominance is maintained is different from total exclusion, but the outcome is quite similar.

2. The United States serves as an example where the values, attitudes, and beliefs of one group rule the educational system. The competitive nature of schools, the tendency toward the use of English as the sole medium of instruction, the selective presentation of history, the "tracking" of certain students toward professional careers, the tracking of males toward the "hard" sciences and females toward the "soft" sciences, all reflect biases of views of the dominant cultural group in the larger society (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963).
3. Recruiting teachers and administrators from the dominant group ensures (although not completely) that a certain ideology will be taught. Again, the United States serves as an example in which the majority of teachers and administrators, even in Mexican-American communities, are representative of the dominant group (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a). The theory thus holds:
   a. In societies in which education is reserved for the elite, the allocation of resources and people is clearly intended to produce domination. Members of subordinate groups do not attend school and members of the dominant group do.
   b. In modern corporate society, resources as well as individuals are distributed unequally among the schools. Some schools are primarily reserved for

members of the dominant group and these tend to accumulate higher quality resources (e.g., faculty, facilities, equipment, funds, etc.).

c. Screening and acceptance of individuals into these schools are carefully biased toward members of the dominant party. It was only a few years ago that in the United States, for example, Blacks, Mexican Americans, and women were not admitted into some colleges and universities because of their skin color or sex. Thus, there is much evidence to suggest that reasons causing the differential performance of the children of the dominant group versus the children of the nondominant groups are varied, complex, and interactive. This theoretical framework suggests that it may be the combination of attending schools with unequal resources; the predominance of the dominant group's ideologies, beliefs, norms, language, and other cultural factors guiding the school system; and the unequal opportunity for attending or staying in school which cause the discrepancy.

There are numerous statistical studies focusing on the differences in the educational experience of majority and minority students which could be cited as evidence to support the foregoing propositions. In Chapter Four we discuss this research while exploring specific differences in schooling between Mexican Americans and Anglos.

Notes

5. This is precisely why Illich (1970) argued that modern "education" should be more accurately termed "schooling." No longer are schools places where the goal is "to develop, in each individual, all the perfection of which he is capable," as Kant envisioned. Instead, they are places where the masses are processed (in much the same way as factories process goods) for their roles in society, to the benefit of the dominant culture.

6. Individuals who for any reason (from personal choice to structural conditions) do not attend school are labeled "uneducated" and treated as second-class citizens (their opportunities are greatly reduced). These individuals are perceived as illiterate, unthinking, and unintelligent, and are treated accordingly. Having no formal education in modern society places one at the bottom of the opportunity structure. Ironically, society assures that these individuals come to believe in the virtues of education.

CHAPTER THREE

Mexican Americans and Anglos in the American Social Structure

In the preceding chapter we described theoretical applications of the group conflict model to the institution of education. Now we will apply it to the structure of American society by focusing on current Anglo/Mexican-American relations. The conflict paradigm predicts and explains disparities in the relative positions of these groups. The model characteristically predicts that given their subordinate status, Mexican Americans will possess less of society's resources (including access and opportunity) than the dominant Anglo community. In this light we will examine statistical data in several areas including income, occupation, and political activity. We maintain that these three vital areas of institutional participation represent a persistent pattern which reflects the low status of Mexican Americans in our society. We have excluded a discussion of education from this chapter because of the important role it plays in modern America; consequently, we have devoted an entire chapter to it (Chapter Four). Before moving into the substantive areas, some background demographic information is provided on characteristics of Mexican Americans.

Demographic Characteristics

Numbers

Although data collected on racial and ethnic minorities are subject to considerable enumeration and sampling errors (Hernández, 1973; Fernández, 1975), the Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic minority in the United States. It has been estimated that by the year 1990 Hispanics will constitute the largest ethnic minority group in the country, surpassing the Black population. The number of Spanish-surnamed people in the United States has

continued to increase in recent years as a result of high birth and immigration rates. Mexican Americans, in fact, have the highest birthrate of any ethnic group in the United States (Moore, 1970:84-85).

Between 1960 and 1970, for example, Mexicans in the United States grew by 70 percent while Anglos grew by only 35 percent. Given present birth and immigration rates, the population of California will be greater than 50 percent Mexican or Mexican American by the turn of the century. Americans of Hispanic background are estimated to constitute about 8 percent of the total U.S. population, or 12 million people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978), forming the second largest minority in the country, slightly lower than the Black population. Of these 12 million Spanish-surnamed persons, the great majority (7.2 million) are of Mexican origin or ancestry (see Table 1).

Table 1*

Persons of Hispanic origin in the United States as of March 1978

Origin or Ancestry	Number
Total	12 million
Mexican	7.2 million
Puerto Rican	1.8 million
Cuban	700,000
Central or South American	900,000
Other Hispanic background	1.5 million

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978:Figure 1.

This figure of 7.2 million does not include individuals of Mexican origin who are residing in the United States undocumented--i.e., those who entered the country without proper legal documents. While there is a history of continuous migration from Mexico, there appears to be renewed interest in coming to the U.S. In 1975, for example, almost three times as many Mexicans (62,205) entered the U.S. on legal permanent resident visas as did individuals from all other countries in South America combined, and almost as many as the total number of immigrants from all of Europe (Imigration and Naturalization Service, 1975). In the same year, 680,392 "deportable Mexican nationals" were apprehended by the Border Patrol, representing almost 90 percent of their total apprehensions for the year (Cornelius, 1978). At present no one knows the number of undocumented migrants in the country; estimates have ranged from as low as 1 million to as high as 12 million. Five million seems to be a generally accepted figure; however, no one is sure. An appropriate methodology for counting undocumented migrants has not been developed; their existence depends on remaining anonymous.

Regional Distribution

While Hispanics reside in every state, major regional concentrations have traditionally developed. Currently, about 90 percent of the Mexican-American population is located in the five southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. The highest concentration are found in California and

Texas; however, substantial numbers reside in the other three southwestern states (Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico) and in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Chicago. Interestingly, Mexican Americans constitute the largest ethnic or racial minority group in the states of Washington and Minnesota.

Within the Southwest, the largest proportion (48 percent) of the Mexican American population is located in California, which, consequently, also has the largest absolute number (over 3 million). There are twice as many Mexican Americans in California as Blacks; in fact, they are more numerous than all other minorities combined (García and Espinosa, 1976). It is estimated that by 1989 Mexicans and Mexican Americans will comprise over 50 percent of the population of California.

Furthermore, although a substantial proportion of Mexican Americans reside in rural communities and the stereotype of Mexicans and Mexican Americans continues to focus on characteristics of the peon campesino (farm worker), the vast majority (81 percent) of Mexican Americans are concentrated in metropolitan areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978). As a group, Mexican Americans live and work in urban centers. In 1975, 43.9 percent of Mexican Americans lived in central cities (excluding suburbs) compared to only 25.5 percent of Anglos (U.S. Department of Labor, 1978:6). In California, for example, 91 percent of Mexican Americans live in urban areas, approximately 7 percent live in rural nonfarm communities, and approximately 2 percent reside in rural farm areas.

In some cities, like Los Angeles, the majority are located in the inner city. (In fact, Los Angeles is now the second largest Mexican city in the world; that is, more persons of Mexican origin or ancestry live in Los Angeles than in any other metropolis except Mexico City). Thus, the Mexican-American population is predominantly an urban population.

This urban concentration was predictable. As mechanization decreased the number of farm labor jobs available to a work force with relatively little education and experience, Mexican Americans moved into low-paying jobs in industry (on assembly lines) and service occupations (e.g., waitresses, busboys, janitors, maids, cab drivers, etc.) which are primarily located in densely populated areas.

Age Distribution

In 1978 the median age of the Mexican-American population was 21 years of age as compared to 29 years of age for the non-Hispanic population (see Table 2), indicating that a large proportion of this ethnic group are of elementary and high school age. In Table 2 we see that this is indeed the case; almost one-half (43 percent) of the Mexican-American population is under 18 years of age compared with less than one-third (29 percent) for the non-Hispanic population. Futhermore, in 1976, more than 13 percent of the Mexican-American population was under 5 years old, while in the entire nation only 7 percent of the population was under 5 years old (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977).

Table 2*

Proportion of persons of Hispanic origin
under 18 years of age

Origin or Ancestry	Proportion under 18	Median Age
Mexican	.43	21
Puerto Rican	.46	20
Cuban	.26	36
Central or South American	.33	27
Other Hispanic background	.43	22
Not of Hispanic origin	.29	30

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978:Table 2.

At the same time, the proportion of older persons was smaller for the Mexican-American population than for the overall population. In 1978, for example, only about 4 percent of Mexican Americans were 65 years old or over compared to 11 percent of the overall population.

These differences in age distribution between Mexican Americans and Anglos are primarily due to differences in fertility and life-expectancy rates (morbidity and mortality). On the average Mexican Americans live fewer years than Anglos and proportionately have about twice as many children (Uhlenberg, 1973). In 1976,

Mexican-American families tended to be large, with an average of 4.19 persons per family (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977). Moreover, 13 percent had 7 or more members per family. Bahr, Chadwick, and Stauss (1979:181-182, 204) conclude from their review of existing data that presently Mexican Americans are the most fertile ethnic group in the United States.

Regardless of the causes of the age differences between Mexican Americans and Anglos, the distribution suggests a growing need for improved education, housing, employment, and income for Mexican Americans. We turn now to an examination of some of the data in these areas.

Employment

The employment picture for Mexican Americans is bleak vis-à-vis Anglos; the empirical data are consistent with our conflict model. Given the interrelationships among occupation, income, power, and prestige we would expect subordinate groups to be unemployed at larger rates and those who are employed to hold lower status positions. This, indeed, is the pattern found in the United States for Mexican Americans.

Unemployment

A recent publication of the U.S. Department of Labor (1978:20-21, 30) confirms the unemployment hypothesis: Mexican Americans are more likely than Anglos to be unemployed. In 1976, for example, 11.8 percent of Mexican-American workers were unemployed compared to 7.4 percent of Anglos. The same pattern was found controlling for sex; Mexican-American men and women were more likely to be without a job than Anglo men and women.

With the exception of persons 65 years old and over, Mexican-American males and females had higher unemployment rates than Anglos at every age category. Among men, for example, 20.5 percent of Hispanics aged 16 to 24 were unemployed in 1976 compared to 15 percent of their Anglo counterparts. A similar pattern was found in the other two age categories--25 to 44 and 45 to 64. Finally, over one-fourth (26.7 percent) of Mexican Americans in the labor force in 1975 experienced some unemployment compared to less than one-fifth (19.1 percent) of Anglos. These figures are conservative; it has been shown that the Hispanic unemployed tends to be undercounted (U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, 1978b).

Occupations

The work experience of Mexican Americans differs significantly from that of Anglos. Mexican Americans, as a group, experience less opportunity for employment and when employed tend to hold low status positions. In 1975, for example, 57.3 percent of Mexican-American males worked year round, full time compared to 64.7 percent of Anglo male workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 1978:27). The pattern was similar for women; 41 percent of Anglo women worked year round, full time compared to only 32.2 percent of Mexican-American women.

With respect to the major occupational categories, the figures indicate that the Mexican-American population is disproportionately represented in low status, low paid jobs and underrepresented in high-income, prestigious, and powerful decision-making positions. Specifically, a recent study by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1978:27) indicates Mexican

Americans are severely underrepresented in professional, technical, managerial, and sales jobs and overrepresented in labor and service positions.

Table 3 presents figures from 1976 for employed males aged 16 and over. For the total male population, 42 percent were employed in white-collar occupations compared to only 18 percent of Mexican-American males. By contrast, 64 percent of Mexican-American men worked in blue-collar jobs compared to only 44 percent of their Anglo counterparts. While only 1.6 percent of the total male work force was in farm labor, 7.8 percent of Mexican-American males were farmworkers.

Table 3*

Occupations of employed Mexican-American males and of the total United States male population 16 years of age and older, March 1976

Occupation	Total Male Population	Mexican-American Males
Professional, technical, and kindred	15.4	5.5
Managers and administrators, except farm	14.2	5.6
Sales workers	6.1	2.1
Clerical and kindred	6.3	4.9
Craft and kindred	20.5	19.1
Operatives, including transport	17.0	29.0
Laborers, excluding farm	7.1	14.3
Farmers and farm managers	2.6	.6
Farm laborers and supervisors	1.6	7.8
Service workers	9.0	10.9

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977:Table 10, Bahr, Chadwick, and Stauss, 1979:166.

A comparable pattern existed for women. Women in the general population were almost three times as likely as Mexican-American women to hold professional positions (16.2 percent vs. 6 percent). Almost two-thirds (63.6 percent) of all women were employed in white-collar occupations compared to 44.1 percent of Mexican-American women. These large numbers are deceiving since a very large proportion of white-collar women were employed in the secretarial-clerical category (68 percent of Mexican-American women and 55 percent of all women employed in white-collar occupations worked as secretaries and clerical workers). And although relatively few women (.7 percent) were employed as farm laborers, the rate for Mexican-American women was almost four times as high (2.5 percent).

Although much discussion has been given to occupational access, and "affirmative action" programs have been implemented, Bahr, Chadwick, and Stauss (1979) find that the disparities between Anglos and Mexican Americans in the major occupation categories have not changed significantly. They compared data for 1970 and 1976 and found that "in no occupational category is there evidence of an improvement in occupational position for Mexican Americans" (p. 166). In fact, Mexican Americans fell further behind Anglos in that six-year period. Bahr, Chadwick, and Stauss conclude that "the evidence suggests that the relative disadvantage of the person of Spanish origin is <u>increasing</u> rather than decreasing" (p. 166). Romero (1977) also found this pattern;

between 1960 and 1970 Mexican Americans "lost ground" vis-à-vis Anglos in occupational standing, particularly in the professional and managerial categories.

Income

Earnings

Our theoretical model when applied to income predicts that since wealth is a highly valued resource in society, subordinate groups will tend to have less of it than the dominant party possesses. Even without the group conflict framework, given the information of employment in the preceding section, one would expect that Mexican Americans earn less than Anglos. Data recently published by the U.S. Department of Labor (1978: 31, 33, 41) confirm this hypothesis. Median earnings for Mexican-American men in 1975 were less than seven-tenths of those of Anglo men ($6,745 and $10,184, respectively). A similar pattern was found for women; the median for Mexican-American women was slightly more than seven-tenths of that of Anglo women.

On a weekly basis, Hispanic full-time wage and salary workers in 1978 earned about $60 less than their Anglo counterparts. In fact, the advantage that whites command in weekly earnings has changed very little since 1967 (Dearman and Plisko, 1979:236-237).

In the same year, only 15.7 percent of Hispanic males and 1.8 percent of Hispanic females who worked year round, full time earned $15,000 or more compared to 37.4 percent of Anglo men and 2.9 percent of Anglo women. Over one-half (55.5 percent)

of Hispanic men who worked year round, full time earned less than $10,000, while only 29.5 percent of Anglo men earned this little. The ethnic differences for women were also significant though not as large: 85.6 percent of Hispanic women and 74.5 percent of Anglo women earned less than $10,000.

The median income for Mexican-American families in 1975 was $9,546 compared to $14,268 for Anglo families. About three in ten Anglo families earned over $20,000, while only one in ten Mexican-American families earned this much. By contrast, Mexican-American families were more than twice as likely as Anglo families to have earned less than $4,000 in 1975. Over one-half (52.6 percent) of all Mexican-American families earned less than $10,000 compared to less than one-third (30.7 percent) of Anglo families.

These ethnic differences in income tend to persist. Chiswick (1978) found that holding several variables constant (e.g., education, number of weeks worked in the year, and length of time in the United States), Mexican-born men still have substantially lower earnings than other white male immigrants. He notes, moreover, that

> even second and third generation Mexican American men have substantially lower earnings than other second and third generation white male Americans (Chiswick, 1978:122).

Poverty

Mexican Americans earn less than Anglos and at the same time tend to have larger families. Hence, we would expect a larger proportion of Mexican Americans than Anglos to fall

below the poverty level. In 1975, Mexican Americans 16 years old and over were almost four times as likely as Anglos to be in poverty (U.S. Department of Labor, 1978:45). A similar pattern existed for persons who had worked year round, full time. Among families, 26.7 percent of Mexican Americans had incomes below the poverty level in 1975 compared to 7.6 percent of Anglo families.

Housing

Lower incomes also contribute to poor and inadequate housing. A recent federal report (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1978) found that in 1976, 19 percent of the units inhabited by Mexican Americans had one or more flaws in electrical wiring, plumbing, heating, or sewage compared to 10 percent of the units inhabited by the general population. Furthermore, Hispanics live in older housing and pay more for it in relation to their incomes than the general population. Fifty-eight percent of Hispanics rent their housing units compared to 35 percent of the general population.

Underrepresentation in the Political System

Structural Barriers

The conflict model when applied to the political system implies general underrepresentation for the Mexican-American community. The dominant group, in an effort to control its interests, attempts to monopolize policy decision-making offices. Historically the Anglo community in the United States has employed various practices to exclude and control minority access to the political system. Studies have focused on the structural barriers that have

impeded participation by the Mexican-American population (McClesky and Merrill, 1973; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1973). García (1976-77) and García and de la Garza (1977) have identified the following factors as barriers to political participation: literacy tests, annual registration, poll taxes, lack of facilities to register to vote, gerrymandering, voting requirements, and at-large elections. Socioeconomic status is also a major contributing factor to the low participation rates among Mexican Americans. Education, income, and occupation have been found to be positively correlated with political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972); individuals of higher socioeconomic status participate in greater numbers. Mexican Americans, moreover, tend to hold negative feelings toward government agencies (Welch, Comer, and Steinman, 1973), which lead to feelings of cynicism and alienation toward the electoral process (Juárez, 1973).

An example of structural conditions that have impeded Mexican-American participation can be found in literacy tests. Until recently several states had laws requiring voters to pass literacy tests which demonstrated proficiency in the reading and writing of the English language (García and de la Garza, 1977). Such a requirement discriminates even against literate but non-English-speaking citizens, such as Mexican Americans. In California it was not until 1970 that the state Supreme Court ruled that (given citizenship) literacy in the Spanish language was sufficient for voting qualification (Genoveva Castro et al. vs. State of California, L.A. no. 29693).

Local Representation

Table 4 presents data on Mexican-American representation on the city councils of nine Texas cities for 1970. In none of the cities were Mexican Americans represented with parity to their proportion of the cities' populations. In El Paso, a city in west Texas and on the U.S.-Mexico border, over one-half of the population (58.1 percent) was Mexican American, yet only about one-tenth (11.4 percent) of the councilmembers were Mexican American. In five of the nine cities, in fact, not a single Mexican American had been elected to the city council. San Antonio came closest to reaching proportional representation with 52.1 percent of the city's population being Mexican American and 27 percent of the councilmembers Mexican American. Even here, however, Mexican Americans could not carry the vote (i.e., vote as a bloc and control the decisions).

In a more recent study, Welch and Karnig (1979) found that in 1978 only 6.5 percent of 124 cities in the Southwest with a population of 25,000 or more had Hispanic mayors. This represented a slight drop from 1973 when 7.3 percent of these communities had Hispanic mayors. The proportion of cities with some Hispanic councilmembers rose form 20 to 39.5 percent between 1973 and 1978. The mean percentage of Mexican Americans represented on these councils increased modestly from 8.5 to 11.2 percent. However, Mexican Americans were still greatly underrepresented. The authors note that

> Since the mean Chicano proportion in these cities is about 25 percent, they are being represented at about 45 (percent) of what one might expect based on their population alone (Welch and Karnig, 1979:1).

Table 4*

Mexican-American representation in city councils in nine Texas cities in 1970

City	Percent Mexican-American Population	Percent Mexican-American City Councilmembers
Austin	16.0	0
Beaumont	4.5	0
Corpus Christi	40.5	14.3
Dallas	6.7	1.3
El Paso	58.1	11.4
Fort Worth	9.2	0
Lubbock	16.0	0
San Antonio	52.1	27.0
Waco	7.4	0

*Source: García and de la Garza, 1977:109.

It has been argued that part of the problem is due to reapportionment (gerrymandering)--the process whereby the population of any given state is divided into legislative districts for purposes of electing representatives to the state legislative bodies and the House of Representatives (Riddell,1978). Redistricting, of course, is a political process which the dominant party can use to maintain control of subordinate groups since district boundaries can be drawn to diffuse minority concentrations. Apparently this is what has happended in California and other southwestern states (Riddell, 1978).

In a study of ten large Northern California cities (Berkeley, Daly City, Hayward, Oakland, Richmond, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Stockton, and Vallejo), Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (1979) found that in 1960 not one had any minority (Black or Hispanic) councilmembers (including mayors), although most of the cities had a minority population exceeding 20 percent of the total. Substantial changes occurred subsequent to the periods of racial unrest during the late 1960s and early 1970s. (In fact, "The first minority councilmembers in the three largest cities--Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose-- were appointed to office" following such periods (p.1).) However, by 1978 only in a few cases had minorities achieved parity on city councils, commissions, and in city employment, "leaving minorities still seriously underrepresented and on the margins of city politics" (p.1). Moreover, Hispanics were even more underrepresented than Blacks; in none of the ten cities had Hispanics reached parity by 1978 while Black representation was close to the proportion of Blacks in the population of more than one-half of the cities, and above it for two (Berkeley and Stockton).

State Level

A comparable pattern exists at the state level. With the exception of New Mexico, Mexican Americans have been systematically excluded from political participation in the state legislatures. Garcia and de la Garza (1977:105) discuss the situation in California.

> Nonetheless, in California, political structures have been successful in minimizing Chicano representation. Since 1848, Chicanos have always been underrepresented in the state assembly and senate, and often there have been no Chicanos in either chamber.

> From 1849 to 1973 over 900 individuals served in the senate and over 3075 in the state assembly. During this time only 9 Chicanos were elected to the senate and 24 to the assembly, and half of these 33 were elected between 1849 and 1864. In 1974, the first Chicano in sixty-two years won election to the state senate, and Chicanos made noteworthy gains in the state assembly as well. This general lack of representation is not related to a lack of candidates. Between 1960 and 1970 alone, 11 Chicanos ran unsuccessfully for the state senate, and 56 ran for the assembly.

The historical pattern of underrepresentation persists in modern times. Table 5 presents information on Mexican-American officials in the five southwestern state legislatures for 1973. In every state Mexican Americans were significantly underrepresented, but particularly in California, Colorado, and Texas. In California, for example, where Mexican Americans formed almost 20 percent of the population, only 4.2 percent of the legislators were Mexican American. Currently there are six Mexican Americans in the California Legislature; a very modest increase since 1973 when there were five.

Table 5*

Mexican American representation in state legislatures in the Southwest in 1973

State	Total Number of Legislators	Number of Mexican American Legislators	Percent Mexican American of Total	Percent Mexican American Population
Arizona	90	11	11.1	18.8
California	118	5	4.2	15.5
Colorado	100	4	4.0	13.0
New Mexico	112	32	34.0	40.1
Texas	181	10	5.5	18.4

*Source: García and de la Garza, 1977:107.

The pattern of underrepresentation of the statewide decision-making bodies is extensive. Mexican Americans are excluded to a comparable extent in state boards, commissions, and other high-level organizations where important decisions are made. In spite of the fact that, proportionately, Mexican Americans have more school age children, Mexican Americans have not been represented on state boards of education. The figures in Table 6 show that Mexican Americans were underrepresented in all of the southwestern states in 1970. Two of the state boards of education, Arizona and Colorado, did not have any Mexican Americans although a substantial proportion of the student bodies were Mexican American (19.5 percent in Arizona and 13.7 percent in Colorado). But even in the states with some representation, Mexican Americans had little voting power (i.e., they did not form the majority and thus could not vote as a bloc and control the decision).

Table 6*

Mexican American representation on state boards of education in the Southwest in 1970

State	Total Number Board Members	Number of Mexican Americans	Percent Mexican American of Total Board Members	Percent Mexican American Students
Arizona	9	0	0	19.5
California	10	1	10	16.5
Colorado	5	0	0	13.7
New Mexico	10	3	30	39.4
Texas	24	2	8.3	22.6

*Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974:13.

The extent of Mexican-American underrepresentation at the state political level is illustrated by the experience in California as of 1970. A publication by the California State Advisory Commission (1970) shows that in that year:

1. Only 2 percent of 15,650 elected and appointed officials at municipal, county, state, and federal levels were Mexican American.
2. None of the top 40 state officials were Mexican American.
3. None of the top advisors to the governor were Mexican American.
4. Of the 4,023 positions in the executive branch, including boards and commissions, only 2.5 percent were filled by Mexican Americans.
5. Only 2 percent of all city and county officials were Mexican American.
6. Mexican Americans did not hold any of the top 132 state court positions, including Supreme Court justices, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Commission on Judicial Qualification, and the State Court of Appeals.
7. Of all federal officials, including legislators, marshals, and United States attorneys and their assistants, only 1 percent were Mexican American.
8. A mere 6 Mexican Americans held positions with the U.S. Court of Appeals and U.S. Courts, including judges, referees, probation officers, commissioners, and marshals. None of the 6 were judges or referees.

9. Of 700 state senate and assembly staff members listed in the official directory, only 7 had Spanish surnames.

National Representation

The conflict model implies that as one moves up the political structure to the upper levels where major decisions are made, fewer subordinate group members will be found. In other words, "key" political positions will be controlled by the dominant group. Historically in the United States, Mexican-American underrepresentation has been most extensive at the national level. Few Mexican Americans have ever been elected to the Senate or House of Representatives. In 1977, for example, there was only 1 Mexican-American senator and 4 representatives (García and de la Garza, 1977:71). Thus 5 out of 535 members of Congress were of Mexican-American ancestry; this was about 1 percent representation for over 5 percent of the population.

Even fewer Mexican Americans have been appointed to the top-level, administrative, and policy-making positions (e.g., secretaries of the various federal department--Housing, Labor, or Health, Education, and Welfare--or to the Supreme Court and Ambassadorships). Less than 20 Mexican Americans held key positions in the executive branch in 1973 (Gómez, 1976).

As of November 1970, for example, Spanish-surnamed individuals comprised a mere two-tenths of one percent of all federal, full-time employees at the highest grade level, GS-18 (U.S. Civil Service Commission, 1970:32). In fact, Mexican Americans constituted less than 1 percent in all categories above the GS-12.

The largest proportion of Hispanics, as expected, was located at the bottom of the grade scale; Hispanics formed 4.6 percent of all GS-1 employees. Their representation decreased systematically with advancing grade levels.

For Anglos, on the other hand, their proportional representation increased at each higher grade level; Anglos held only 46.4 percent of all GS-1 jobs, but they occupied an astounding 98 percent of all positions at the GS-18 level. In fact, Anglos held 90 percent or more of all positions above the GS-8 level. Put in another way, Anglos constitued at least 90 percent of all federal employees earning $12,000 or more and 100 percent of all government employees earning $28,000 or more (U.S. Civil Service Commission, 1970:33).

Summary

Empirical evidence consistenly shows systematic differences in the sociostructural position of the Mexican-American community vis-à-vis the Anglo community. In this chapter we examined some data on differences in employment, income, and political participation. Specifically, Mexican Americans were found to be overrepresented in low status, low paid occupations (e.g., laborers, service, and farmworkers) and very underrepresented in prestigious, decision-making, and professional occupations. In addition, the unemployment rate for Mexican Americans is generally twice that of Anglos.

Mexican-American families earned less income than Anglo families and a greater proportion of the Mexican-American community lived in poverty. Mexican-American families, moreover, must spread their lower earnings over a larger number of individuals since they tend to have larger families than Anglos.

Mexican Americans were greatly underrepresented (in proportion to their population) at every level of the sociopolitical structure (local, state, and federal). In fact, the underrepresentation becomes greater the higher one moves in the political system: i.e., fewer Mexican Americans are found at the national level in positions of power (where decisions are made which have an impact on the whole society) than at the local level (in positions of limited power).

The evidence is overwhelmingly consistent with the presence of intergroup conflict as predicted by the group conflict model. Mexican Americans, in short, occupy a subordinate position in American society. From the perspective of social change, one must begin immediately to explore specific strategies available to enhance Mexican-American power.

In the following chapter we examine the evidence of group conflict effects in the educational realm focusing on differences between Mexican Americans and Anglos. The importance of formal education for participation in modern society is universally understood. In modern societies and in the United States in particular education serves as a major factor in determining the life experience of individuals. Specifically, education serves as the main entry (and perhaps the only legitimate means) to the occupational sphere. Mexican Americans for example, need to increase their number in areas such as voter registration, participation as delegates to party conventions, and candidacy

for political office. Otherwise, the American political structure will continue to maintain the Mexican American as powerless. The conflict perspective implies that social change which results in a shift of power among groups must be caused. In Chapter Five we discuss the process and implications of social change in modern America.

C H A P T E R F O U R

Educational Attainment and the Mexican-American Student

The importance of formal education in modern society and in the United States in particular cannot be overstressed. Apart from the daily experience which is often dependent on basic skills (e.g., reading and completing forms, reading signs, following written directions, adding and subtracting money when buying goods, etc.), education is most important as a visa to the job market. All major, top-level positions in the United States require a high level of formal education, and often specialized education. As we know, the system does not permit individuals to become doctors without first having completed a recognized curricula in a medical school, or lawyers without having graduated from a recognized law school. But even access to lower-level jobs is dependent on formal education (e.g., sales clerks are required to add, subtract, and read). In one way or another schooling and education are part of every job application. The importance of educational attainment for opportunity was summarized by Levin, Guthrie, Kliendorfer, and Stout (1971:14).

> Educational attainment and opportunity are linked in many ways. Abundant evidence supports the view that education affects income, occupational choice, social and economic mobility, political participation, social deviance, etc. Indeed, educational attainment is related to opportunity in so many ways that the two terms seem inextricably intertwined in the mind of the layman and in the findings of the social scientist.

In this way, education has served as the "sorting machine" for selection of subordinate groups (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Spring, 1976). Elite schools normally do not admit students from nonelite schools--most Mexican Americans are <u>not</u> in elite schools. Mexican Americans get put down twice, once because they attend nonelite schools and once because they have the "reputation" of not being among the academically gifted. At each

higher level more persons are excluded from the educational system; the pool of advancing students becomes increasingly smaller with each higher level. The group conflict model would predict that in a society where educational attainment is the major legitimate avenue for social mobility, subordinate groups would tend to be less successful than the dominant group. This hypothesis follows from our discussion of the importance of education as a major social institution in Chapter Two. Applied to the United States, the conflict model would predict that Mexican-American students would tend to be less successful than Anglo students. This hypothesis, as we shall see, can be tested in several ways. In this chapter we examine some of the evidence on Anglo/Mexican-American differences in the schooling experience.

Geographic Distribution

Well over two million Spanish-surnamed students are enrolled in the public elementary and secondary schools of the continental United States.[7] More than 70 percent of these pupils is located in the five southwestern states. The overwhelming majority (over 95 percent) of Spanish-surnamed students in these borderland areas are of Mexican origin or ancestry.

It is estimated that over eight million students attend public elementary and secondary schools in the Southwest (see Table 7). Seventeen percent of these students is Mexican American.[8] Of these, over 80 percent is enrolled in two states, California and Texas. Almost 50 percent is found in California alone.

Table 7*

Mexican American and Anglo enrollment in the Southwest in 1971

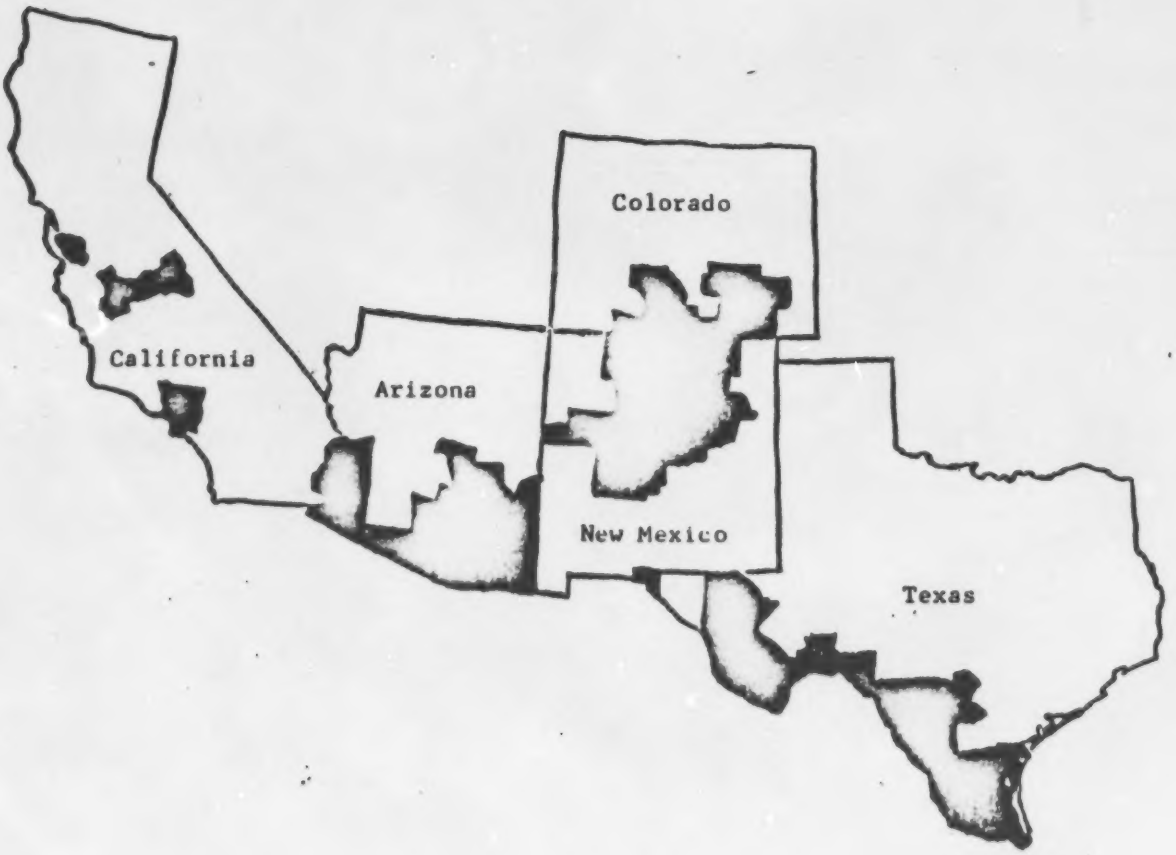
State	Anglo		Mexican American	
	Number	Percent of Total Enrollment	Number	Percent of Total Enrollment
California	3,323,478	74.2	646,282	14.4
Texas	1,617,840	64.4	505,214	20.1
New Mexico	142,092	52.4	102,994	38.0
Arizona	262,526	71.6	71,748	19.6
Colorado	425,749	82.0	71,348	13.7
Southwest	5,771,684	70.9	1,397,586	17.2

*Source: Adapted from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a:17.

Figure 4 presents the primary concentrations of Chicano students in the Southwest. In Arizona and Texas, in particular, the concentration of Mexican-American pupils is literally a U.S.-Mexico borderland phenomenon. In Texas, approximately two-thirds of the total Mexican-American enrollment in the state is located along the Mexican border. In Arizona, 55 percent of the Mexican-American students is located in the southern part of the state along the border. In other states Mexican-American students are somewhat more widely dispersed although major concentrations are found in urban centers (e.g., Los Angeles and San Jose, California; Denver and Pueblo, Colorado; and Albuquerque, New Mexico).

Figure 4*

Major concentrations of Mexican-American students in the Southwest



*Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a:19.

Major Problem Areas

As expected given our theoretical model, Mexican-American students have had considerable difficulty with public education in the United States as evidenced by the following statistics.

1. A larger proportion of Mexican Americans have completed fewer years of schooling than Anglos or Blacks. This

is especially the case at high school and college levels. Based on the 1970 Census the median number of years of school completed was 9.1 for Mexican Americans, 11.2 for Blacks, and 12.4 for Anglos (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977).

2. High dropout rates are a characteristic problem. At ages 16 and 17 there is a sharper decrease in the number of Mexican-American students enrolled in school than in either the number of Black or Anglo students enrolled. By the end of twelfth grade, at the time of graduation from high school, only about 60 percent of Mexican-American students is still in school compared to 67 percent of Blacks and 86 percent of Anglos (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b). In all five southwestern states the proportion of Mexican Americans decreases at evey level from elementary through secondary enrollments. The proportion of Mexican-American enrollment decreases from 18.6 percent at the elementary grades to 16 percent at the junior high level to 14.8 percent at the senior high level. On the other hand, the proportion of Anglo enrollment increases at every level, 68.8 percent to 71.6 percent to 75.3 percent (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).
3. A smaller proportion of Mexican-American students enter college, about 23 percent compared to 49 percent of Anglos (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).

4. An even smaller proportion of Mexican-American individuals graduate from college--approximately 5 percent compared to 24 percent of Anglos and 8 percent of Blacks (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).
5. Over-ageness is a problem related to high dropout rates. At every grade level Mexican-American children are more likely to be two or more years over-age than either Black or Anglo students. In the majority of cases over-ageness is primarily due to grade repetition. Generally, Mexican-American pupils are more likely to repeat grades than Anglo students. In California, for example, 10 percent of Mexican-American students repeats first grade compared with 6 percent of Black and Anglo students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).
6. Mexican-American students are more likely to be behind in both verbal and math achievement than Anglo students. This is particularly the case in reading achievement where, for example, from 50 to 70 percent of Mexican-American Students in the Southwest is reading below their grade level compared to only 25 to 34 percent of Anglo pupils. Furthermore, the achievement gap becomes wider as one moves up the educational system. That is, in the fourth grade about 17 percent of Mexican-American students reads two or more years below grade level. By the 12th grade, 40 percent is this far below (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).

7. Impeded social and educational development is also reflected in the smaller representation of Mexican-American than Anglo students in extracurricular activities, especially in those which hold the most prestige. This is true whether Mexican-American students constitute a (numerical) majority or a minority of the enrollment (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a).
8. Perhaps the most difficult problem faced by the Mexican-American student is that of unfamiliarity with the English language in a system which is distinctly unicultural and monolingual. It has been estimated that about 50 percent of Mexican-American first-graders in the Southwest does not speak English as well as the average Anglo first-grader (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972a). The social-psychological impact of having an immediate and persistent cultural and language difference may be severe, especially for the older student who has resigned himself or herself to the idea that he or she does not have the ability to learn in the English language.

It is apparent that attention must be focused on cultural and language differences if these students are to have a chance at succeeding in the public school system. In a study the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1972a:48) concludes,

> ...the schools use a variety of exclusionary practices which deny the Chicano student the use of his language, a pride in his heritage, and the support of his community.

At the very least, proficiency in Spanish must be encouraged rather than discouraged by the schools if they are to provide equal educational opportunity.

The situation outlined above represents the current, bleak picture of the educational experience of Mexican-American students. And although it is a well-known and accepted fact that the Mexican-American experience in schools is problematic on various dimensions, relatively little research exists in this area. The Mexican-American experience in education has not been totally ignored, but there is considerable room for improvement.

Key Resources in the Literature

There are two pieces of work which are essential to anyone interested in understanding the experience of Mexican-American students in public schools. The first is Carter and Segura's Mexican Americans in School: A Decade of Change, published in 1979. The second is a set of six reports published between 1970 and 1974 by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Although the latter series is somewhat outdated, both of these materials continue to be important resources for teachers, researchers, and anyone else interested in this topic.

Carter, a sociologist, and Segura, an educator, discuss a wide range of topics and cover them thoroughly. Research produced in the past decade was reviewed in the following areas: the academic achievement of Mexican Americans versus other groups; the effects of bilingualism on educational performance; self-concept; poverty; segregation; cultural exclusion; failure of the schools as opposed to failure of the culture; intellectual capacity; cognitive style; teacher perceptions and behavior; and other related issues.

Their conclusion, while consistent with the group conflict model, is not very encouraging for Mexican Americans.

> It is axiomatic that predicting the future requires understanding the present and its antecedents. Although it is impossible to predict with certainty, it is possible to suggest future educational directions. Barring catastrophic events, there is every reason to believe schools will change little in the next 10 years; they have changed little in the past (Carter and Segura, 1979:381).

The six reports published between 1970 and 1974 are the result of an extensive five-year Mexican-American Education Study directed and executed by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. This series of reports offers the most comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of opportunities available to Mexican-American students in the public schools of the boarderlands.

Each of the six reports examines a different aspect of the Mexican-American experience in education in the Southwest. Briefly, the first studies the extent to which Mexican-American students experience segregation in schools, and the low representation of Mexican Americans as teachers, school administrators, and school board members. The Commission concludes that: 1) Mexican-American students are isolated by school districts and within districts by schools; 2) Mexican Americans are underrepresented at every level of administration (school, district, board of education); and 3) most Mexican-American staff are found in predominanly Mexican-American schools or districts. Similar findings were reported by García and Espinosa (1976) in a more recent study of the State of California.

The second report documents the failure of schools to educate Mexican-American and other minority students, as evidenced by reading achievement levels, dropout rates, grade repetition, "over-ageness," and participation in extracurricular activities. The researchers found that

> ...minority students in the Southwest--Mexican Americans, Blacks, American Indians--do not obtain the benefits of public education at a rate equal to that of their Anglo classmates. This is true regardless of the measure of school achievement used (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b:41).

The third report examines the practices of schools in dealing with the unique linguistic and cultural characteristics of Mexican-American students. The Commission finds that schools use various "exclusionary practices" which deny Mexican-American students use of the Spanish language, pride in their ethnic heritage, and the direct support of their community.

The fourth report describes ways in which the school finance system in Texas works to the detriment of districts in which Mexican-American students are concentrated. The basic finding is that the amount of money spent to educate Mexican-American students is three-fifths that spend in the education of Anglo pupils.

The fifth report measures the extent to which differences exist in the verbal interactions of teachers to their Mexican-American and Anglo students. The Commission concludes that the schools are failing to involve Mexican-American students to the same extent as Anglo pupils.

The sixth and final report of this series focuses additional attention on the specific problems in the education of Mexican-American students and recommends actions at various government and educational levels which may alleviate those problems.

Again, these six reports constitute the most comprehensive and extensive documentation of the Mexican-American experience with schooling in the Southwest.

Other key materials in the study of Mexican-American education in the Southwest are: Demos (1962), Fernandez (1977), Hernández (1973), and Weinberg (1977:Chapter 4). These four publications offer substantial summaries and reviews of the literature on various topics within the area of Mexican Americans and education. To be sure, the findings reported and summarized in the above publications are consistent with the group conflict explanation, that is, Mexican-American students have been unsuccessful relative to Anglos. In the following pages we focus on some of the specific areas and findings.

School Holding Power

School holding power has been defined as the school system's "ability to hold its students until they have completed the full course of study" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b:8). School holding power is calculated by comparing enrollment at different grades with the assumed baseline of 100. In other words, holding power is a percentage of a hypothetical 100 students beginning school who are still in school at any given grade.

School holding power, in short, looks at what are more commonly known as dropout rates. The difference between the two concepts, however, lies in the focus each brings to bear on the phenomenon. "Dropout rates" tend to focus on the student as the main actor, implying that students leave school due to personal choice. "School holding power," on the other hand, focuses on the school system, implying that schools play a central role in retaining and turning away students. The former concept focuses on the individual and the latter on the system.

Regardless of which term is used, the empirical evidence remains the same: fewer Mexican Americans than Anglos are found at every grade level. The disparity, in fact, increases with advancing grade levels. To date, the most comprehensive and reliable study of schools in the Southwest (Carter and Segura, 1979) found that Mexican Americans had the highest rate of attrition in relation to Anglos and Blacks before high school graduation and that the loss began much earlier for Mexican Americans than for Anglos. By the eighth grade, for example, only 91 percent of Mexican Americans were still in school compared to almost 100 percent of Anglos. Nine percent of Mexican American students had already dropped out of school by the eight grade.

In high school the dropout rates increase for both Mexican Americans and Anglos; the increase, however, is greater for Mexican Americans. Only about 60 percent of Mexican-American

students in the Southwest were still in school at the time of high school graduation compared to 86 percent of Anglos. Two-fifths of Mexican-American students did not receive a high school diploma.[9] The importance of a high school diploma in modern society and in the United States in particular cannot be overemphasized. This degree is essential, not because it provides direct access to the resources, but because without it all legitimate access is greatly restricted. Put differently, the high school diploma opens the door, it does not let one in; without it, however, the door remains shut, locked, and bolted. In this way, a large proportion of the Mexican-American population is cut off from any opportunity to advance into the prestigious, high paid, and powerful positions in the employment and economic hierarchy, assuring that the dominant group will continue to control such positions.

Similar findings were reported in a study focusing on the effects of busing and school desegregation on dropout rates (Felice and Richardson, 1977). This study was conducted in a "small community" with a population which was approximately 65 percent Anglo and 15 percent Mexican American. The data for 1971 indicated that the dropout rate between seventh and twelfth grades for students in segregated schools was 4.1 percent for Anglos and 13.8 percent for Mexican Americans. Desegregation seemed to have little impact on the dropout rate for either group.

In 1975, 5.6 percent of Anglo and 11.2 percent of Mexican-American students dropped out of school. Although the school's social class was found to effect dropout rates, ethnic differences did not disappear when school socioeconomic status was controlled (see Table 8). Mexican-American students dropped out in greater numbers than their Anglo counterparts in both high and low socioeconomic status schools. The dropout rate for Mexican Americans, however, was significantly lower in the high socioeconomic status schools.

Table 8*

Dropout rates for 1971 and 1975 for Mexican-American and Anglo students in a Southwestern community by school and socioeconomic climate

School Socioeconomic Climate	Mexican American		Anglo	
	1971	1975	1971	1975
High	9.3	7.8	2.6	5.4
Low	15.7	14.8	6.7	5.7
Totals	13.8	11.2	4.1	5.6

*Source: Adapted from Felice and Richardson, 1977:244.

In 1977, one-third of Hispanic young adults (ages 16-24) were not enrolled and had not completed high school compared to about 11 percent of white students (Dearman and Plisko, 1979:184). This high dropout rate remained farily constant throughout the 1970s, with only modest but insignificant changes.

Academic Achievement

The importance of reading is widely recognized in modern society. Even for individuals whose livelihood does not center on reading and writing, reading is an important, if not essential, part of the daily experience. Individuals who cannot read in contemporary society are automatically excluded from participation in all "important" activities. In 1970, Sidney P. Marland, then U.S. Commissioner of Education, recognizing the importance of education, stated the following:

> Acknowledging all the explanations and justifications, we must, as a Nation, discover ways to teach all mentally adequate citizens to read. Even at the expense of other very important programs, this essential function of civilized man must have preeminence in our priorities. Otherwise, our best intentions in other social interventions, such as job development, equal opportunity, housing, welfare, and health will have only passing and peripheral effect (American Education 7, 1971:4).

Reading achievement levels have traditionally been recognized as a means of determining success in schools, and indirectly, in the larger society. Thus conceived, the schools have contributed to the low levels of achievement among Mexican Americans.

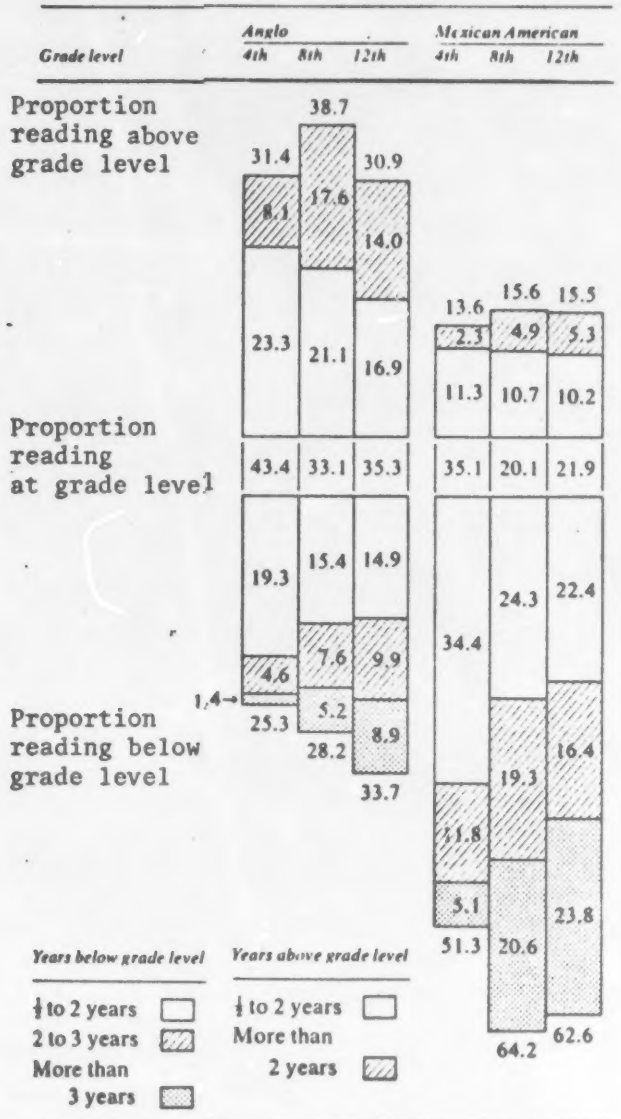
Patterns of Mexican-American academic learning are well established and tend to persist. Mexican Americans in school achieve at substantially lower rates than do their Anglo counterparts. The research in this area has been conclusive and convincing; at every grade level, Mexican Americans, as a group, score much lower on achievement tests (see, e.g., Carter, 1970; Carter and Segura, 1979; Coleman et al., 1966; Fernández, Espinosa, and Dornbusch, 1975; Gorden et al., 1968; Grebler, 1967; Sells, 1979; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b).

Reading achievement disparities between Anglos and Mexican Americans, in fact, increase with advancing grade levels. Although Mexican-American and Anglo children start school fairly close in all areas of measured achievement, systematic and consistent differences have been established by the fourth grade. The most extensive study of schools in the Southwest, for example, found that by the fourth grade over one-half (51 percent) of Mexican-American students were reading below grade level compared to 25 percent of Anglo students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b). At the same grade level, 31.4 percent of Anglo students were reading above grade level, yet only 13.6 percent of their Mexican American counterparts were reading above grade level (see Figure 5). Of these, 8.1 percent of Anglo students and 2.3 percent of Mexican-American students were reading at the sixth grade level or higher, that is, over two years above their present level.

In fourth grade, 43.3 percent of Anglo students but only 35.1 percent of Mexican Americans were reading at grade level. Twice as many Mexican-American as Anglo pupils were found to be reading below grade level (51.3 and 25.3 percent, respectively). Of those students reading below grade level, almost three times as many Mexican Americans as Anglos were reading more than two years below grade level (16.9 and 6 percent, respectively).

Figure 5*

Reading levels in the Southwest for Mexican American and Anglo students in the fourth, eighth and twelfth grades



*Source: Adapted from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b:25

Figure 5 also presents data on reading achievement for the eighth and twelfth grades. Interestingly, the disparity in reading achievement between Anglos and Mexican Americans increases with advancing grade levels. In the eighth grade, Mexican-American students were twice as likely as Anglos to be reading below grade level (64.2 and 28.2 percent respectively). Of those, 20.6 percent of Mexican Americans but only 5.2 percent of Anglos were reading more than three years below grade level, that is, below the fifth grade level. Mexican-American students, as expected, were less likely to be found among students reading above grade level. Again, in the eighth grade, 38.7 percent of Anglo students but only 15.6 percent of Mexican-American students were reading above grade level. Of these, 17.6 percent of Anglos and a mere 4.9 percent of Mexican Americans were reading more than two years above grade level (above the tenth grade). Furthermore, a larger proportion of Anglo than Mexican-American students were reading at grade level (33.1 and 20.1 percent, respectively).

The pattern, as expected given the above information, continues through the twelfth grade, in spite of the fact that a large proportion of the Mexican-American students who tend to be poor readers have already dropped out by this grade. Almost twice as many Mexican-American as Anglo students were found to be reading below grade level in the twelfth grade (62.6 and 33.7 percent, respectively). Of these, 8.9 percent of Anglos and 23.8 percent of Mexican Americans were reading more than three years below grade level. At the top end, 30.9 percent of Anglo but only 15.5 percent of Mexican-American

students were reading above grade level. Of these, Anglos were almost three times as likely as Mexican Americans to be reading more than two years above grade level (14 and 5.3 percent, respectively). Anglo students were also more likely than Mexican-American students to be reading at grade level (35.3 and 21.9 percent, respectively).

A similar pattern was found in a study of high school students in San Francisco, California (Espinosa, Fernández, and Dornbusch, 1979; Fernández, Espinosa, and Dornbusch, 1975). Data from this study showed that Mexican Americans were more likely than Anglos to be among the low achievers in both verbal and math achievement tests.[10] Among males in the eighth grade 29 percent of Hispanics but only 5 percent of Anglos scored below the fifth grade level in verbal achievement. In the tenth grade, 23 percent of Hispanic males and 6 percent of Anglo males scored below the sixth grade level in verbal achievement. Similar patterns were found for females.

Although the differences were not as large for scores on math achievement tests, the pattern was identical. Among eighth grade males, 18 percent of Hispanic and 6 percent of Anglo students scored below the sixth grade level. For males in the tenth grade, 24 percent of Hispanics and 7 percent of Anglos scored below the seventh grade level in math achievement. Similar patterns were found for females. Espinosa, Fernández, and Dornbusch (1979:142) concluded that

> ...this lack of preparation in basic skills leaves Chicano... students at a disadvantage in high school. In general, students lacking basic skills have a lower probability of succeeding or becoming better students in later years. There is a circular pattern in which low achievers are likely to receive low grades, are less likely to work hard, and thus remain low achievers.

Statewide data for California also show that Hispanic students score lower than Anglos in both reading and math achievement tests (Espinosa, personal communication).[11] These data for the 1978-1979 academic year indicate that Mexican Americans tend to do less well than Anglos at all three grades for which test scores were available (third, sixth, and twelfth). Among twelfth graders, for example, 42.9 percent of Hispanics but only 10.6 percent of Anglos scored below the 25th percentile on reading achievement tests. About three-fourths (74.2 percent) of Hispanics scored below the 50th percentile compared to about one-third (34.5 percent) of Anglos. At the top end, only 9.1 percent of Hispanics and 34.1 percent of Anglos scored above the 75th percentile. Using the same data, Sells (1979:1) found that

> Spanish speaking children show the greatest disadvantage in reading and mathematics scores, among those who spoke limited English, as well as among those who spoke fluent English.

Zoloth (1975) reports similar findings from a study of all public elementary schools in a middle-sized city in the Southwest (the population in 1970 was about 300,000). Although slightly more than 20 percent of the city's population was of Hispanic background, about 27 percent of the elementary school students were Hispanic and 65 percent were Anglo. Zoloth reports that at all three grade levels (third, fifth, and seventh) for which they had results on the verbal portion of the Lorge-Thorndike ability test, Mexican-American students scored significantly lower than Anglo students. He found that socioeconomic factors,

while accounting for a significant portion of test-score differences between Mexican-American and Anglo students, did not account for all ethnic differences.[12] In fact, Mexican Americans scored lower than Anglos within each of the eight socioeconomic categories. Moreover, the scores of Mexican-American students in relation to those of Anglos did not change much over time. The author's conclusion supports the group conflict model.

> Finally, the persistence of significant test-performance differences between Anglos and minorities (Mexican Americans and Blacks) over time leads one to conclude that the school system described in this study succeeded in maintaining the relative performance position of the three major racial/ethnic groups but did not substantially succeed in eliminating the performance deficiency exhibited by minority students (Zoloth, 1975:28).

Other Variables

Academic Self-Concept

Self-concept is a common variable associated with the low academic status of Mexican-American students. It is argued that Mexican-American pupils have lower self-esteem than Anglo students due to discrimination, cultural conflict, and their subordinate status in the larger society. However, a search of the literature reveals mixed findings. As Fernández (1977) and Hernández (1973) have noted, the question, "Do Mexican-American students have lower self-concepts than Anglo students?" remains largely unanswered.

Numerous studies report a significant difference in the academic self-evaluations of Mexican Americans and Anglos, with Mexican American students holding lower views of their academic ability (e.g., Coleman et al., 1966; Firma, 1970; Gustafson

and Owens, 1971; Hishiki, 1969; Mabry, 1968; Palomares, 1968). Other studies report no significant differences in self-concept between the two groups (e.g., Carter, 1968; DeBlassie and Healy, 1970; Dornbusch, 1974; Larkin, 1972; Linton, 1972; Valenzuela, 1971).

No doubt some of the variability in the findings is due to the different designs of the studies and to the numerous instruments used for measuring self-concept. Yet it is conceivable that both sets of findings are accurate. One can even envision studies which find that Mexican-American students have higher self-concepts than Anglos, as Soares and Soares (1969) claim. What needs to be researched in great detail in the future are the conditions under which self-concept for minority groups differs vis-à-vis the dominant group. Other hypotheses that need to be researched include the following: What environmental factors account for the different findings? What structural conditions must exist in order for ethnic differences to disappear? Because self-concepts are directly related to achievement, further research in this area is urgently needed.

Educational and Occupational Aspirations

Aspiration is another variable that has often been linked to academic achievement. It is argued that high educational and occupational aspirations of both students and parents result in higher motivation on the part of the student and that this motivation, in turn, results in higher achievement. This proposition has been generally supported by research.

In the case of Mexican-American students, the findings are fairly consistent. Earlier literature accepted the

"fatalistic" and "present day" orientation aspect of the Mexican-American stereotype and thus assumed that Mexican Americans had lower aspirations. In the social sciences, it has been assumed that Mexican-American culture interferes with the intellectual development of children. This perspective has come to be known as the "damaging-culture view," recently defined by Ramírez (1979:7) as

> the theory that the culture and values of members of minority groups are the ultimate and final cause of the low economic status and low academic achievement of members of these groups.

Research findings strongly challenge this belief. Although a few studies (Demos, 1962; Mabry, 1968) report lower aspirations for Mexican-American students and parents than for Anglos, most research, particularly the more recent work, finds no significant difference in the level of aspiration between these two ethnic groups (Anderson and Johnson, 1971; Heller, 1964; Johnson, 1970; Juárez and Kuvlesky, 1969).

These findings are encouraging. Mexican-American students care about their schooling and they are supported in their view of school as important by their parents. However, we cannot place too great an emphasis on aspirations. The basic problem still remains that there continues to exist a large disparity between Mexican-American and Anglo achievement. It is, therefore, unrealistic to believe that Mexican-American students will reach their high educational and occupational aspirations. Schools must find a means of preparing minority students for the professional careers to which they aspire.

Bilingual/Bicultural Education

Bilingual/bicultural education is the latest effort employed by the schools in an attempt to raise the educational achievement of Mexican-American students. Clearly this type of instruction is relevant and essential in the education of these students. Yet, bilingual/bicultural education as currently applied to Mexican Americans in the Southwest is destined for failure.

There is a great deal of confusion about the goals, content, and methods of bilingual/bicultural education. Fishman (1977) has identified three types of bilingual/bicultural education--compensatory, enrichment, and group maintenance. From our perspective, the major reason why bilingual/bicultural education in the U.S., and particularly in the Southwest, is destined for failure is that it is viewed as applied in compensatory terms. Programs of a compensatory nature are geared to overcoming "diseases of the poor." The primary goal is to increase overall achievement by using the mother tongue (Spanish) for instruction until the child develops skill in the dominant language (English) to the point that it (English) alone can be used as the medium of instruction.

The U.S. government supports bilingual/bicultural education for compensatory (i.e., achievement) reasons, not to maintain and promote cultural and group diversity. However, compensatory programs applied merely as transitional or remedial measures will not succeed in substantially raising the achievement of Mexican-American students, as Danoff, Coles, McLaughlin, and Reynolds (1978) found. When applied in this way, bilingual/bicultural education is merely a fad with, at most, a short-term

effect. These types of programs will continue to alienate Mexican-American children from their homes, community, and the larger society. Futhermore, policy makers and school administrators (as well as some of the advocates) view bilingual/bicultural education as a cure-all for the low academic status of Mexican-American students in the Southwest. It is unrealistic to expect that bilingual/bicultural education will ameliorate the diverse problems of Mexican Americans in the larger society. This kind of burden will only contribute to the failure of these programs. There are many other factors which directly and indirectly contribute to this ethnic group's low success rate in schools (e.g., socioeconomic status, prejudice, discrimination, power, and the basic structure of society) which bilingual/bicultural education does not affect.

Higher Education

The experience of racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities in the educational system, and of Mexican Americans in particular, as compared with Anglos in the United States closely fits the theoretical model outlined above. Weinberg (1977:Chapters 7 and 8) has carefully documented the historical exclusion of minority students from higher education. He found that

> Racial and ethnic exclusion was even more sweeping and effective among colleges and universities than among common (elementary and secondary) schools. The greater intellectualism of the former did not moderate the operation of exclusionary trends (Weinberg, 1977:263).

Higher education for Mexican Americans only became a reality after World War II. Weinberg (1977:343) writes:

> Prior to World War II the sparsity of Mexican-American students on college campuses underscored their extreme minority status in the Southwest. Both in the classroom and in student activities, they were treated, at best, with condescension.

Even in the late 1960s, four-year colleges in the Southwest had token enrollments of Mexican Americans. San Fernando Valley State College in Southern California enrolled only seven Mexican-American students in 1967. At the University of California at Los Angeles only 2.3 percent of its undergraduate enrollment was of Mexican-American background in 1968. At the University of Texas Mexican Americans made up 3 percent of the total enrollment in 1967, hardly a representative number. Stanford University enrolled only twenty Mexican Americans in their graduate programs in 1968 (López, Madrid-Barela, and Macías, 1976). Using 1970 enrollment figures, Crossland (1971) estimated that Mexican-American enrollment would have to be increased by 330 percent in order to attain proportional representation for Spanish-speaking persons in higher education.

Although a significantly larger number of Mexican-American students is now attending college, parity has not been reached (see Table 9). In 1970, Spanish-surnamed individuals comprised only 2 percent of all students enrolled full time in undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. Anglo students comprised 90 percent of the total enrollment, decreasing slightly to 87 percent by 1979 (Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, 1979: Report No. 2A57). Mexican-American underrepresentation was even greater in graduate and professional programs. Mexican Americans, for example, constituted a mere seven-tenths of one percent of all students enrolled full time in dentistry. Anglos comprised 93.8 percent of all dentistry students.

Similar patterns were reported for 1973 (Commission on Human Resources, 1974). The data reported in Table 10 show

Table 9*

Enrollment of Mexican American and Anglo students in full-time undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools, Fall 1970

Type of School	Spanish-surname No.	%	Anglo No.	%
Undergraduate	102,788	2.1	4,439,542	89.4
Graduate**	4,830	1.2	362,329	92.3
Medicine	340	0.8	39,598	93.2
Dentistry	100	0.7	14,053	93.8
Law	686	1.1	58,550	94.2
Total	108,744	2.0	4,914,072	89.7

**The category "graduate" includes enrollment in professional schools except medical, dental, and law schools.

*Source: Office of Civil Rights, 1970:116, 177, 190, 200.

Table 10*

Mexican American and Anglo doctorate recipients for 1973

Field of Doctorate	Percent Mexican American	Percent Anglo
Physical Sciences	.8	78.3
Engineering	.5	69.5
Life Sciences	1.2	78.2
Social Sciences	.5	84.8
Arts and Humanities	1.1	87.3
Professional Fields	.4	86.6
Education	.7	84.9
Total	.8	81.7

*Source: Commission on Human Resources, 1974:4.

that Mexican Americans were greatly underrepresented in all fields among recipients of the doctorate in 1973. Mexican Americans received only eight-tenths of one percent of all doctorates awarded in that year compared to 81.7 percent for Anglos. Mexican Americans were even more underrepresented in engineering, the social sciences, education, and the professional fields. A similar pattern continued throughout the 1970s. In 1976, for example, Mexican Americans received less than one-tenth of one percent of all doctorates awarded in the behavioral sciences compared to 83 percent for U.S.-born whites (National Research Council, 1977).

Interestingly, more doctorates were awarded in the same year to foreign students (4,071) than to all minority U.S. citizens (2,372) (Dearman and Plisko, 1979:214). Moreover, Anglos received more bachelor's, master's, doctor's, and first-professional degrees than their proportional representation of the total U.S. population.

A 1976 follow-up survey of a national sample of the graduating high school class of 1972 also found that college graduation rates are higher for Anglos than for Hispanics (Eckland and Wisenbaker, 1979). The lower graduation rates for Hispanics were found to be a function of the differences in the dropout rates rather than in the amount of time taken to finish their degree. Among men, 34 percent of Anglos and 57 percent of Hispanics had dropped out without graduating. The figures were almost identical for women. Again, socioeconomic status did not eliminate the ethnic differences. The authors conclude,

> Looking at educational attainment in terms of receipt of a bachelor's degree for graduate or professional school attendance, one finds that Hispanics had the lowest

attainment rates at each SES level--less than one-half the rates for whites in the middle and high SES categories (Eckland and Wisenbaker, 1979:7).

Community Colleges

Higher education has been able to continue a dual stratified system. Close examination reveals that Mexican-American students are overrepresented in community colleges and underrepresented in public four-year institutions (see Table 11). In 1971, roughly equal proportions of all students in the Southwest attended community colleges and four-year colleges (43.6 and 64 percent, respectively), yet, for Mexican Americans the disproportion was enormous (61.1 and 28.5 percent, respectively).

Table 11*

Enrollment of Mexican Americans in community colleges, public four-year colleges, and private colleges in the Southwest, 1971

College Type	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Mexican Americans	
		Number	Percent
Community	617,000	88,000	14.3
Public four-year	651,000	41,000	6.3
Private	147,000	15,000	10.2
Total	1,415,000	144,000	10.2

*Source: Ferrin, Johnson, and Trimble, 1972:19.

Pincus (1974:17) has clearly demonstrated that while community colleges were given the task of "providing increased opportunity for those students who have been excluded from higher education," they have not realized this goal. Community colleges have been unable to "democratize" higher education

or to provide "equal opportunity" for minority and poor students. In fact, through their stratified structure and operating procedures

> the community colleges play an important role in maintaining educational inequality and, as a result, help to reinforce the system of class and ethnic stratification that exists in the United States (Pincus, 1974:18).[13]

Moreover, while the rapid growth of the community colleges since 1960 has been due partly to the demands of the poor and ethnic minority students for a college education,

> Community college development has been strongly supported by the government, the large corporations, and the educational establishment. Consequently, the community colleges use standards that are defined by people at the top, have programs that benefit the people at the top, and reward students for having skills that are more accessible for people at the top (Pincus, 1974:33).

Moore (1976:42) goes as far as to say that

> The two year college systen in the United States is a system <u>of whites</u>, is controlled and operated <u>by whites</u>, and reserves its major rewards <u>for whites</u>. (emphasis in original)

Nonetheless, the demography of Mexican Americans and the growth of two-year colleges (71 percent of the colleges and universities established between 1960 and 1977 were two-year colleges (Dearman and Plisko, 1979)) inevitably resulted in high Mexican-American enrollments in these institutions and in a major increase in the number of Mexican-American students attending institutions of higher education. However, as Astin (1975) and others have noted, the accessibility of community colleges is accomplished at some cost to the quality of education received by students in these institutions. It has been shown that two-year students are less likely to take baccalaureate degrees than four-year enrollees (by attending community colleges, baccalaureate-aspiring students reduce their chances

of completing the bachelor's degree by 12 percent), are less likely to live on campus, receive less public educational subsidy, and are less likely to be exposed to high quality faculty. In 1978, for example, community colleges enrolled 31 percent of all college students but only 22 percent of all full-time instructional faculty were employed in two-year colleges (Dearman and Plisko, 1979). On the other hand, universities had the smallest share of enrollment (25 percent) and a faculty share of 31 percent. Moreover, there is a tendency for community colleges to hire faculty below the doctoral level.

Faculty and Administration

A natural but lamentable corollary to these findings is that Mexican-American faculty and administrators have also been quite sparse on college and university campuses. The failure to employ minority faculty is not, and has never been, the result of a shortage of qualified candidates; the relative lack of Mexican-American faculty is due to exclusion and discriminatory practices on the part of white institutions. Even in the face of federal regulations which forbid any contractor with the federal government to discriminate on account of race, color, nationality, or sex, institutions of higher education continue to lack Mexican-American faculty and top-level administrators. Affirmative action plans have been formulated and approved but for the most part have not been enforced. The attitude continues to be one of tokenism.

In 1973, less than 1 percent (.6) of all higher education faculty was of Hispanic background (Bayer, 1973). Similar underrepresentation rates were found among administrators

(Olivas, 1978). In 1978 there were only fourteen Mexican-American college presidents in the country, twelve of them in community colleges. Very few Hispanics are found on boards of trustees which oversee colleges; a study of community college boards found that fewer than 2 percent of the private sector were Hispanic (Drake, 1977).

> It could be said that the lack of Hispanic access to postsecondary education is matched by the lack of opportunity for Hispanic leadership in these institutions (Olivas, 1978:9).

Group Conflict and Educational Change

The late 1960s and early 1970s were years of significant change in the higher education experience of minorities. Recent changes in the educational system with respect to ethnic, racial, and cultural minorities can be traced to the riots and demonstrations of that period. The minority group "movement" of the late 1960s and early 1970s offers a case in point and a clear illustration of group conflict theory as it applies to society at large and to higher education in particular. Viewed in light of the conflict model, this epoch can be interpreted as a period of contested power struggles in which the ruling status of the dominant group (Anglos) was challenged by minority groups (Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans). The evidence suggests that the dominant cultural community lost some of its stature as Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans surfaced and demanded equal opportunity in education, housing, employment, etc.

Recall that our theory implies that a shift in socio-political power and control in the greater society will be

evidenced in its institutions and organizations. In terms of our example, it means that we should be able to document changes in higher education--changes to the benefit of racial, ethnic, and cultural minority groups.

Indeed, a surface look at higher education provides a basis for some conclusions on this issue. Numerous changes in the structure, personnel, curriculum, and student body resulted directly from the activities of the late and early 1960s and 1970s.[14] Some of the more visible results include:

1. the development of admission policies to include racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities, women, and low-income groups;
2. the founding of ethnic studies programs or departments (e.g., Chicano Studies, Black Studies, Asian American Studies, and Native-American Studies);
3. the revision of curriculum in traditional departments to include courses on minority groups (e.g., Chicanos in American Society, Black History in the U.S., American Indians, Women and Society, etc.);
4. the creation of administrative offices to assist with minority groups (e.g., Assistant to the President for Chicano Affairs, Affirmative Action Officer, Assistant to the Chancellor for Minority Affairs, etc.); and
5. the development and implementation of affirmative action plans to ensure the hiring, retention, and promotion of minority faculty and administrators.[15]

Viewed in terms of our working model, all of these and other such changes in the educational system are directly linked to group issues and are the results of power struggles in the larger society. Yet, one should be hesitant to conclude that Mexican Americans now experience equal opportunity and educational environments which are genuinely culturally pluralistic. A closer examination, for example, reveals that ethnic studies programs are not on equal terms with other university programs. This is evidenced by the fact that minority programs are held in suspicion; they tend to be viewed and ranked as being of lower quality than traditional departments. Moreover, they were the last to arrive, and when funds become scarce, minority programs are the first to be cut back or completely eliminated. Traditional departments (those supported by the dominant group) tend to possess more of the resources--power, wealth, prestige, facilities, personnel, etc. More often than not, in fact, the different ethnic studies programs on campus are forced to compete with each other for scarce funds. In short, minority programs (and minority individuals) in higher education are subject to the same second-class (lower status) citizenship as their respective cultural groups in the larger society. It appears, therefore, that although significant changes in higher education have been implemented in recent years, the sociopolitical struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s failed to produce a major shift in the power structure.

As Collins (1974:441) has noted

> If in fact educational requirements have become the primary means of cultural control, it is possible to be liberal and "universalistic" without giving away any real advantages (resources) of one's own.[16]

Summary

Although there are other issues which could have been discussed in this chapter regarding the educational experience of Mexican-American students (such as inequalities in financial resources, segregation, institutional discrimination, admissions criteria, grading, tracking testing, school finance, curricula, counseling, etc.), we selected several important areas for which a fair amount of research was available. Achievement and drop-out rates, for example, provide commonly accepted measures of the status of Mexican Americans vis-à-vis Anglos and of opportunity for participation and advancement in the larger society.

The data reviewed in this chapter are overwhelmingly consistent with (and thus support) the group conflict model of society as applied to the educational system. Although Mexican Americans are not formally (through legislation) and overtly excluded from the educational system as they once were,[17] the outcome is much the same since the educational structure systematically filters them out. As the findings show, a large and significant proportion of Mexican-American students drop out before graduating from high school. Such individuals, of course, are automatically excluded from the valued and powerful occupations. Their subordinate status, if not totally assured, is almost certain.

This filtering-out process continues into the post-high school experience, so that we find fewer Mexican Americans at every higher and more prestigious level. In other words, disproportionately fewer Mexican Americans than Anglos are enrolled in colleges and universities and fewer still are found in law, medicine, dentistry, and other professional fields.

Moreover, even among students who remain in school, Mexican Americans achieve at lower rates than Anglos. A stratification system operates within the schools as well. The well-documented cultural bias of testing instruments notwithstanding,[18] achievement and I.Q. tests continue to be used for excluding minorities from graduate and professional schools and thus from the top-level occupations in the larger society (Wallach, 1976).

Anglos, on the other hand, are overrepresented at every level, particularly at the postsecondary level and in the more prestigious institutions. Their participation and success in major universities and prestigious professional schools assures their placement at the upper levels of the occupational hierarchy, and as discussed previously, assures the maintenance and perpetuation of the present ethnically stratified structure of society. The advantage of the dominant group in American society is clear, systematic, and well documented.[19]

Finally, in this chapter we also began to focus on social change and specifically on change in the educational system. We found that although several substantive changes in the educational system occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s,

the pattern of outcomes for Mexican Americans relative to Anglos remains the same. In the following chapter we explore further th. notion of social change from the group conflict perspective, focusing on the educational system as a microcosm of the larger community.

Notes

7. This figure as well as those following are taken from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a:15-20.

8. Although the focus of this report is on public education, nearly 20 percent of the total Catholic school enrollment (elementary through secondary) in the Southwest is of Mexican-American background (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a).

9. Some of these dropouts may eventually return to a community college and complete the requirements for the high school diploma. This number, however, is very small. Moreover, any advantage of having a high school diploma will have been lost by this time. In other words, individuals who drop out of high school and later receive the high school diploma will have lost time, and thus their opportunity for further educational and occupational advancement will be limited.

10. We recognize that there has been a substantial amount of controversy regarding achievement and ability tests. Mercer (1973, 1976, 1977), for example, has shown that "sociocultural" variables such as acculturation, socioeconomic status, and family structure and size account for up to 27.5 percent of the variance in cognitive measures among Anglo and Mexican-American children. The five most significant sociocultural characteristics were:

1. Living in a household in which the head of household has a white-collar job;
2. Living in a family with five or fewer members;
3. Having a head of household with a skilled or higher occupation;
4. Living in a family in which the head of household was reared in an urban environment; and
5. Living in a family in which the head of household was reared in the United States.

The greater the number of these five characteristics that the Mexican-American subject possessed, the higher his or her I.Q. score was likely to be. Jensen (1974), however, reported that ethnic background made no significant contribution to the prediction of scholastic achievement independent of psychometric, personality, and demographic variables. In spite of the "cultural bias" inherent in most testing instruments (Averch, 1972; Mercer, 1971; Wallach, 1976), test scores continue to be used by both schools and parents as measures of the effectiveness of education. For us, scores on achievement tests reflect skills, not intelligence or biological capacity. While such tests have deficiencies, they do predict school performance in English-language schools.

11. These data were acquired through personal communications, but will be published soon. The same data, however, were published by the California State Department of Education in their 1978-1979 annual report on student achievement.

12. Similar findings for the effects of social class and ethnicity on educational achievement were reported by Bender and Ruíz (1974).

13. Clark (1960) has described this aspect of the community college system as serving a "cooling-out" function in higher education for poor and minority students.

14. Major changes also occured at the elementary and secondary levels (e.g., implementation of bilingual curriculum and

instruction programs, modification of traditional materials to include more accurate information on racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities, emphasis on multiculturalism, etc.).

15. The senior author has gathered data from a small survey of ten universities in the Southwest which show that, in all ten universities, these types of changes occured (were implemented) since 1968.

16. In one sense, and in light of this statement, it may be argued that ethnic programs in higher education serve an initial latent function to the advantage of the dominant group by "cooling-out" and co-opting subordinate groups and by diverting them from the "real" academic and professional subjects.

17. Prior to 1938, for example, in Pecos, Texas there was a policy of not permitting Mexican Americans to go beyond the sixth grade. It wasn't until the mid-1960s that Mexican-American students were admitted into fraternities and sororities at the University of New Mexico (Weinberg, 1977:343). Also, as late as 1972, schools in the Southwest had policies which prohibited Mexican and Mexican-American students from speaking Spanish anywhere on school grounds (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972a). These policies may have been rescinded, but more subtle, though no less effective, practices have been substituted; results are strikingly similar.

18. On October 11, 1979 the U.S. District Court for Northern California ruled in Larry P. vs. Wilson Riles that I.Q. tests used to place students in "educable mentally retarded" (EMR) classes were racially and culturally biased. The judge set an injunction against the use of such tests on the basis that the use of I.Q. tests resulted in

> the misplacement of black students in special classes that doom them to stigma, inadequate education, and failure to develop the skills necessary to productive success in our society (No. C-71-2270 RFP).

19. Incidently, the advantage of the dominant community has recently been documented in a sociological study of Nobel prize laureates in the United States (Zuckerman, 1977). The data conclusively show that the "accumulation of advantage" operates just as much in science as in the rest of society. In a lengthy review of this work Rosenblum (1979:673) notes that the author

> rapidly disabuses us of the myth of the scientist with humble beginnings whose brilliance was recognized and rewarded early. Quite the contrary. The data show that it pays to be a WASP(White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), go to an elite school, and have a scientist or physician for a father.

CHAPTER FIVE

Social Change, Education, and Group Conflict

Social conflict is ubiquitous; it is an essential feature of the structure and process of society. Moreover, because there is conflict there is historical change and development. For Dahrendorf, (1959:208), in fact,

> ...all that is creativity, innovation, and development in the life of the individual, his group, and his society is due, to no small extent, to the operation of conflicts between group and group, individual and individual, emotion and emotion within one individual.

Social change is inevitable. Societies, like all other organisms, change. Time and conflict have an ever-present effect on social change. Each succeeding generation modifies, even if only slightly, the preceding generation's social reality (values, attitudes, beliefs, use of language and other cultural tools, styles of dress, patterns of interaction, family and kinship structures, etc.).

As a general sociological rule, social change tends to occur at a relatively slow pace although the rate increases somewhat with modernization. That is, social change is slower in "primitive" and preindustrial societies than in industrialized and "modern" societies. Under certain conditions, however, social change takes place at an accelerated speed. Wars, revolutions, riots, and other mass movements tend to produce rapid change in societies, commonly perceived as "radical" social change. While we are not calling for such action, we note that: 1) the radicalness of structural change co-varies with the intensity of group conflict; and 2) the suddenness of structural change co-varies with the violence of group conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959:240).

The racial and ethnic demonstrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s (discussed in Chapter Four) illustrate this type of social change and its effectiveness.

Two basic types of social change can be identified--socio-cultural and structural. The first involves changes in the sociocultural arena such as attitudes, values, styles of dress and appearance, arrangements of living patterns, socialization roles, etc. The United States experienced such a sociocultural change during the late 1960s through the early 1970s as middle- and upper-class college and university students questioned living arrangements between males and females (marriage vs. living together), technological advancement (processed vs. natural food and urbanization and suburbanization vs. back to nature), employment (working as a means of social mobility and stability vs. working as an enjoyable experience), etc.

The second type of social change, and the one which directly relates to the group conflict model, involves changes in the structure of society, that is, changes in the power and authority relationships among groups resulting from conflict resolution. Our theoretical framework implies two assumptions regarding this type of change: 1) the dominant group will not give up any power on its own, and even when power is relinquished the dominant group attempts to manipulate the system to its advantage; and 2) the dominant group will attempt to control any conflict which could possibly result in an increase of power for subordinate groups.

Educational Change

From several perspectives, including group conflict, the educational system is perceived as a microcosm of the larger society while being tied directly to the larger society. Thus, we see a correspondence between the ethnic and stratified nature of society and the social structure of education at a particular moment. We concur with Bowles and Gintis (1976:49) who state that

> ...to consider educational change in isolation from other social forces is altogether too hypothetical. The structure of U.S. education did not evolve in a vacuum; nor will it be changed holding other things constant. Education has been historically a device for allocating individuals to economic positions, where inequality among the positions themselves is inherent in the hierarchical division of labor, differences in the degree of monopoly power of various sectors of the economy, and the power of different occupational groups to limit the supply or increase the monetary returns to their services.

The authors continue:

> Repression, individual powerlessness, inequality of income, and inequality of opportunity did not originate historically in the educational system, nor did they derive from unequal and repressive schools today. The roots of repression and inequality lie in the structure and functioning of the capitalist economy.

What we suggest, in short, is that the socioeconomic and power structure of the larger society should be seen as a major determinant of educational structure and that the educational system is used to perpetuate this structure.

The strength of group conflict analysis comes from the need to recognize that the educational system must be viewed within the context of the larger structure of society. Within this

framework, issues of racial, ethnic, and cultural equality in education are directly linked to the racial, ethnic, and cultural composition and sociopolitical structure of the greater society. As Pincus (1974:33) has noted:

> Since the community colleges and other educational institutions are closely tied to the class and ethnic division of labor in American society, the only way to significantly change the educational system is to change the class nature of society. Those that profit from the existing institutions cannot be expected to reform them so that others can share in the rewards.

Careful consideration must be given to the proposition that in order to establish and maintain racial, ethnic, and cultural equality in the educational system one must endeavor to establish racial, ethnic, and cultural equality in society. For after all, society creates and provides the ideologies for the educational system and not vice versa. If the greater society is functioning as unicultural and is dominated by one group, then it must be assumed that criteria for participation will be unicultural and that subordinate groups will be systematically excluded from meaningful and productive participation both in the larger society and in the educational system.

> The unequal contest between social control and social justice is evident in the total functioning of U.S. education. The system as it stands today provides eloquent testimony to the ability of the well-to-do to perpetuate in the name of equality of opportunity an arrangement which consistently yields to themselves disproportional advantages, while thwarting the aspirations and needs of the working people of the United States. However grating this judgment may sound to the ears of the undaunted optimist, it is by no means excessive in light of the massive statistical data on inequality in the United States (Bowles and Gintis, 1976:30).

Group Conflict and Social Change

The group conflict model implies the following propositions regarding social change:

1. Efforts which result in structural change must be based on collective action. Subordinate groups must come to recognize their subordination and take action based on group identity. In other words, efforts focused on structural change should be conscientious and collective.
2. Subordinate groups must exert pressure on the dominant community for a greater share of the resources, power, and other valued social goods. Structural change requires pressure. Subordinate groups cannot wait for social change, they must make it happen. The dominant group will not give up any of the valued resources (key positions, wealth, power, etc.) on its own initiative.
3. Efforts for structural change will be met with resistance from the dominant community since this kind of social change, if effective, will result in a reduction of its power and dominance. Specifically, we hypothesize that the resistance will be greatest in areas where the dominant group perceives that it stands to lose the most power, wealth, and prestige, e.g., high-level positions.

Applied to Anglo/Mexican American relations in the United States, the above propositions translate into the following activities:

1. Mexican Americans must continue to lobby for legislation which recognizes and assures their basic rights (e.g., Hispanic Voting Rights Amendment, bilingual education, immigration laws, employment, etc.),
2. Mexican Americans must litigate for their rights. That is, even once the laws are established, Mexican Americans must continue to pressure for their implementation. The issue here is best exemplified by the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Brown vs. Board of Education which ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional. On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the majority opinion: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Yet, almost thirty years later, Mexican Americans continue to experience such segregation. In fact, between 1970 and 1976, the proportion of Hispanic students attending ethnically integrated schools actually declined, while the proportion attending segregated schools increased (Dearman and Plisko, 1979). Only through litigation has the law begun to be implemented in the Southwest. Another such example can be found in Lau vs. Nichols were in 1974 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public schools must provide

language programs for non- and limited-English speakers, setting a precedent for bilingual education.

3. Mexican Americans must acquire positions of power and positions on decision-making bodies. Specifically, they must run for office and elect candidates at every level of the political system. This is essential since the conflict model predicts that when a group is not involved in the decision-making process, the results are inevitably unfavorable.
4. Regarding policy, Mexican Americans must acquire representation among policy makers as well as among those who implement policy. Put in different terms, Mexican Americans must be represented among the "gatekeepers."
5. Mexican Americans must exert pressure on local boards, commissions, and other decision-making bodies to consider issues which have an impact on the Mexican-American community. That is, Mexican Americans must identify and bring to the forefront issues which they perceive as important.

The mechanics of the methods and means for accomplishing these objectives are complex since it takes a degree of power and wealth to organize and mobilize effectively a subordinate community. Yet, the process is possible and operative, as the case study presented below demonstrates.

The pattern of low levels of political participation among Mexican Americans discussed in Chapter Three serves jointly to reinforce their subservient role and to reinforce the dominant role of the majority group in American society. Our theoretical model implies that Mexican Americans must become politically active if they are to control their environments. The ethnic struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s clearly illustrate the predictive power of the group conflict model.

In some communities, Mexican Americans have begun to take a political stance, and have made substantial gains in controlling their environments as they have become more politically active (a large number of Mexican-American candidates, higher registration and voting rates, etc.). Such is the case in Crystal City, Texas.

A Case Study

Crystal City, Texas is used here as an example of a community which fits the conflict model outlined above. Traditionally controlled by a numerical minority of Anglos, Crystal City is a community in which poor Mexican Americans were able to gain political control of the city and school governments. Even though this case study is not necessarily applicable to Mexican-American urban communities, the richness of data presented may provide workable approaches for increasing Mexican-American mobilization and political effectiveness.

Crystal City is a community of about 10,000 residents located on the Rio Grande Plain approximately 50 miles from the Mexican border and 100 miles from San Antonio. The population is largely Mexican American, slightly over 80 percent, and primarily employed in some facet of agricultural production. Crystal City's claim to fame is that it is the "Spinach Capital of the World." The Del Monte canning plant employs as many as 1,000 people during the winter spinach harvest. Agricultural workers, as we know, are not among the highly paid in the labor force and Crystal City farm workers were no exception. In 1960 over two-thirds of the families had annual incomes of less than $3,000; the median family income was about $2,000. Even in 1960 this was well below the poverty level.

Commensurate with this low level of income was their low level of education. The median level of education for Mexican Americans aged 25 and over was about two years. Among Anglos of this age group the median level was slightly more than eleven years.

This low level of education in conjunction with economic dependence on Anglo farmers created a situation in which the Anglo group was able to maintain and perpetuate its control of the economic, political, and educational systems. In short, "since the founding of the community in 1910, Anglos had maintained monopolistic control of the city" (Miller and Preston, 1973). In fact, one Anglo mayor was in office for thirty-four years.

The educational system was no different; school operations were under the control of Anglos. As late as 1970, the school board was composed of five Anglos and two Mexican Americans. Ninety-seven of the teachers in the school system were Anglos but only thirty were Mexican Americans. The student population, however, was primarily Mexican American, 86 percent.

Political Control of School Operations

The initial impetus for political control of the school board by the Mexican-American community in Crystal City was provided by students. Mexican-American students began discussions of a school boycott in the spring semester of 1969 over the issue of cheerleader selection.

> Traditionally, cheerleaders were selected by a panel of faculty judges according to a quota of three Anglos and one Mexican American. The Chicano students now wanted two more Mexican-American cheerleaders and to have future cheerleaders popularly elected by the student body (Miller and Preston, 1973:779-780).

In their initial petition to the Anglo high school principal the students were turned back, as he felt such a change was absurd. The students developed a second petition and again approached the principal. This time he referred them to the Anglo superintendent who agreed to the demands. Subsequently, at its June meeting, the school board nullified the agreement between the superintendent and the students.

When school resumed in the fall, the Mexican-American students and their parents, led by José Angel Gutiérrez (founder of La Raza Unida Party), again presented their demands.

The school trustees refused to discuss the petition. The following day a school boycott began as approximately one-fourth of the high school students walked out of classes. As the boycott progressed the number of striking students increased.

> By the end of the week, parents had formed an organization to assist the students, Ciudadanos Unidos (United Citizens) and voted to take their children out of the elementary schools (Miller and Preston, 1973:781).

With the intervention of the U.S. Department of Justice, negotiations between the school board and the students began two weeks after the beginning of the boycott. After four days of intensive meetings, the school board agreed to most of the requests.

Mexican Americans, having realized their potential impact, became even more involved during the following year, 1970, as they filed for the three seats that became open on the seven-member school board and the two available positions on the city council.[20] All five Mexican-American candidates were elected. Mexican Americans gained control of both decision-making bodies as one holdover official in each case became allied with the newly elected Mexican Americans.

Since then, Mexican Americans have not only been able to retain their control of both of these governing bodies, but they have made additional gains in key decision-making positions. The position of Superintendent of the Crystal City Independent School District, for example, has been filled by a Mexican American since 1974. Moreover, little chance exists that

Mexican Americans will relinquish their political control of Crystal City in the near future.

School Changes Since Takeover

In the year following the elections, a bilingual education program was implemented in the first through third grades.[21] Since then, bilingual education programs have been introduced at all levels. Some classes are conducted largely in Spanish, and Mexican-American culture and heritage are emphasized. This biculturalism is reflected in various forms, even in the naming of schools. An elementary school built in 1974, for example, was named Benito Juárez Elementary School.

In September, 1971, about fifty Anglo teachers left the district; Spanish-speaking teachers were hired to replace them. The Anglo student enrollment also diminished by one-half. Anglo parents placed their children either in neighboring school districts or in the privately operated Crystal Community Schools. In the 1971-1972 school year only eighteen Anglo students remained in the Crystal City public schools. Few Anglo teachers and even fewer Anglo school administrators are left.

The philosophical and political changes in the school's administration have resulted in the types of positive effects the group conflict model predicts. Hirsch (1975) found that when the Crystal City public schools began to reflect the Mexican-American culture, Mexican-American students began to

have more positive perceptions of themselves and their schools. Given our knowledge of the positive relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, one would expect these students to be performing at a higher level. This indeed was the case.

> The number of (Crystal City) graduates going to college has ranged as high as 82 percent in the past four years, while dropout rates--which were as much as 94 percent among Chicanos per-1970--have been trimmed back sharply (Peterson, 1975).

Gutierrez and Hirsch (1973:845) found that Mexican-American students in Crystal City

> ...no longer feel that they are at the mercy of their environment. They have begun to develop a sense of identity and a sense that they can control their environment--especially their political environment.

The potency of the group conflict model in helping us to understand and explain the Mexican-American experience in Crystal City should be evident. Most importantly, the once subservient Mexican-American community made substantial, concrete gains in the education of their children through controlling the school board and other decision-making administrative positions.

Although Crystal City has been used here as an example, similar communities exist in the rural sector of the Southwest. Corpus Christi, Texas, for example, reveals a similar history: while 62 percent of the school district's students are Mexican American, only five Spanish-surnamed candidates have been elected to the seven-member school board in the past sixty years; no more than two have served at any one point. A

similar pattern has also been documented in Parlier, California where the political system traditionally has been controlled by Anglos while the majority of the population is Mexican American.

Through the use of this case study, however, we do not mean to imply that a change in personnel (from Anglo to Mexican American in this case) is in itself a structural change. Such a change is merely a condition for emerging interests to become values or realities. As new personnel, Mexican Americans must press for actions that result in Mexican-American values becoming realities.

Policy Implications and Conclusions

In this paper we have argued that group conflict theory provides a framework for understanding the low academic status of Mexican Americans. This model views the educational system as an institution dominated by the ruling group in the larger society. This dominant group uses the educational system to maintain, transmit, and perpetuate its ruling status. In this respect, the functions of education are to maintain the dominant status of a particular group in the larger society, and not to serve the larger society as a whole.

Throughout the United States we are faced with the curious phenomenon of whole public school systems serving only the poor and Mexican Americans while being centrally controlled by boards of education that represent the dominant group. We hypothesize that these boards are elected by dominant group voters, basing our hypothesis on comparisons of voter versus non-voter ratios along lines of income and social class (Wattenberg, 1974).

In modern, corporate America, differential group performance is a prescribed outcome of an educational system designed to maintain and expand the dominant group's control. A structural change, such as decentralization, would threaten this control. To be sure, decentralization of school operations implies that the dominant group (Anglo Americans) stands to lose some of its power when Mexican-American communities gain control over the education of their children. This was exemplified in the Crystal City experience discussed above.

Finally, the problems of Mexican-American students run deeper than the situation in the schools. The educational system is only one part of a larger social system. Schools are not isolated units. They operate within and reflect the larger society. The larger society, and thus the schools, expect and accept the lower level of achievement by Mexican-American students and therefore have not been very responsive to these students. We can be certain that if a large proportion of Anglo students were not succeeding in school, the educational system would be restructured with the utmost urgency to eradicate the problems. Unfortunately, the larger society and the educational system do not respond this rapidly to the special needs of Mexican-American students who have had, and continue to have, an educational experience which is demonstrably different from both the majority group's experience and the experiences of other minority groups.

The implications of the foregoing theoretical analysis are simply stated; there is no doubt that the process of bringing about their implementation continues to be complex and meets with resistance.

1. Mexican Americans need to gain political control of the governing bodies that oversee the schools in their communities. Mexican-American students stand to gain from such control. In addition, Mexican Americans should strive to gain equal representation

on all school boards which govern schools with a substantial Mexican-American enrollment. The presence of even one conscientious (responsive to the needs of the community) Mexican-American representative on the school board will begin to have a significant impact on the policies enacted by that body.[22]

As Haro (1977:75) notes:

> The first revolution in American education, the movement for quantity, has been won. The second revolution, the move toward providing equality of opportunity, is underway in the country and in Los Angeles. However, the Mexican community is playing a peripheral role and must rely on the "force of law," not on their own resources, to assure that they recieve just treatment. This will not work. The source of Chicano discontent with the schools is their lack of power in effecting change in that institution. Therefore, Mexican people must reiterate their demand for [increased] community control of their local school and work together to gain that control. Then the revolution of equality will have meaning for the Mexican (brackets added).

2. The model also implies that a similar process of enhanced empowerment needs to occur at all local levels of government (e.g., city council, city commissions, etc.). That is, Mexican-Americans should be represented on all local political bodies in their communities.
3. Logically, this representation should extend to the state and national levels.

The Mexican-American community cannot afford to be complacent with the gains made in the late 1960s and early 1970s, however substantial, visible, and important they have been. Various indicators of social and economic progress show that Mexican-Americans and other minorities continue to lag behind the white community (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1978a). Mexican-Americans, both collectively and individually, must continue to press for equal representation and benefits. Otherwise, the system will revert to its earlier closed form. There is already a substantial shift in national attitudes and policy regarding the rights of minorities as evidenced by the Bakke case and the popularity of slogans like "reverse discrimination."

As Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (1979:7-8) have noted,

> A clear understanding of these representation processes should also enable us to resist the misleading rhetoric of those who allege "reverse discrimination," or claim to uphold "free market competition," when their real motivation is to protect a privileged position they see as threatened by minority success in political participation and employment.

Concrete evidence of this conservative shift can be found at the college and university levels where Mexican-American enrollments have decreased in recent years. At Stanford University, for example, Chicano enrollments in graduate and professional programs declined "for the fourth straight year" (Stanford Observer, 1978). This seems to be a national trend.

The central axis of American democracy is participation and representation. In the past this has been more myth than reality for Mexican Americans and other minorities. Action must be taken to ensure that recent gains are not lost and to develop and enforce policies which indeed guarantee equal representation.

Final Note

The conflict model provides a framework of techniques for placing political pressure on established institutions in order to better respond to the needs of the Mexican-American community nationwide. These basic concerns relate specifically to accurate Census enumeration of Mexican Americans, effective enforcement of voting rights and political participation, implementation of culture-sensitive educational programs,

continuing emphasis in affirmative action in employment, and finally, articulation and enforcement of fundamental human rights for undocumented Mexican-American migrants.

A continuing priority needs to be placed on coalition building between Mexican Americans and other Spanish-speaking peoples residing in the United States. Such a coalition, which would eventually include non-Hispanic groups with similar political interests, needs to work toward defining common goals and developing practical political strategies that will result in greater political enfranchisement. That is, such a coming together of nondominant groups should be demonstrated by significant gains in educational achievement, political influence, income, and respect for the various cultural traditions represented.

Notes

20. It should be noted that Mexican Americans had gained political control of the city council once before, in 1963. Their control, however, was shortlived; Anglos quickly re-established their power.

21. A free lunch program for children of low-income families was also initiated soon after the takeover.

22. An excellent example of this effect can be found in Tucson, Arizona, where a Mexican American was elected to the school board in 1974 (incidentally, he was only the second Spanish-surnamed individual to serve on the Tucson School Board in the more than seventy years this district has been in operation). In the five years he has been in office considerable gains have been made for the Mexican-American student (he was reelected in 1978 and now serves as Chairman of the Board).

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